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# Catharine Maria Sedgwick's "Hope Leslie": Clues to a Woman's Journey.

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CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK'S *HOPE LESLIE*:  
CLUES TO A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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In memory of my beloved sister  
Laura Catherine McMillan  
whose gifts of faith and the imagination  
touched my life and the lives of many

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER	
1 CLUES TO A JOURNEY .....	1
2 (AUTO)BIOGRAPHICAL CONVERSATIONS WITH CATHARINE SEDGWICK .....	27
3 CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS: FRAMEWORKS FOR A NEW EVE AND A NEW ADAM .....	45
4 NOVEL IDENTITIES: SEDGWICK'S <u>HOPE LESLIE</u> AS EXPERIMENTAL GROUND FOR PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION .....	79
5 TESTIMONY AND IMAGINATION: HISTORICAL DISRUPTIONS WITHIN SEDGWICK'S JOURNEY .....	109
6 REDEEMING CULTURAL STEREOTYPES .....	131
7 UNWINDING THE JOURNEY: A FEW CONCLUSIVE THREADS .....	156
REFERENCES .....	180
VITA .....	185

## ABSTRACT

Prevalent in both archetypal and religious literature, the journey motif weaves its way through tales of human growth—stories which grapple with the processes of how people come to be and to know. Such images of identity formation and knowledge construction hold significant implications for the field of education. Indeed, Huebner (1993) notes that “we do not need learning theory or developmental theory to explain human change...The question educators need to ask is not how people learn and develop, but what gets in the way of the great journey—the journey of the self or soul” (p. 405). While Huebner’s suggested paradigm shift is promising, it is limited by current conceptions of the journey metaphor. For example, narratives which promote separation and “rugged individualism” dominate American Literature classrooms, and although the canon contains numerous quest stories, these tales tend to be limited to individualistic journeys which center only on men’s experiences. Therefore, rather than promote a unitary quest which exclusively emphasizes separation, individuation, and male heroes, it is important to investigate and to construct new possibilities that consider the life experiences of women and marginalized peoples.

The focus of this study is the life journey of the once well-known nineteenth century American novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789 - 1867).<sup>1</sup> Using her most

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Baym (1992) notes that in spite of the fact that by the middle of the nineteenth century women writers exceeded male writers “both commercially and numerically” the current nineteenth century *American* literary canon is now devoid of women *novelists* (p. 4).

popular novel Hope Leslie (1827) as a primary source, I will gather clues regarding how a woman I have come to know as a scholar–artist–teacher negotiated her life journey. In particular, I will discuss how Sedgwick’s historical novel became a site from which she could safely experiment with cultural change. Sedgwick searched early national histories and disrupted cultural myths in order to construct spaces for herself, other women, and indigenous peoples within their nation’s story.

In contrast to conventional, linear journeys that stress extreme individualism, Sedgwick’s non-linear quest emphasized the importance of community and an awareness of interconnection. Themes or clues that emerge from her subversive journey, involve an acceptance of contradictions, a reshaping of false binaries, the “redemption” of racial stereotypes, and the creative use of love and the imagination.



## CHAPTER ONE

### CLUES TO A JOURNEY

**“The whole idea of journey is basic to humanity...[but] the really significant journey is the interior journey” (DeWaal, 1997, p. 1)**

**“‘We are what we know.’ We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves—our history, our culture, our national identity—is deformed by absences, denials, incompleteness, then our identity—both as individuals and as Americans is fragmented” (Pinar, 1993, p. 61).**

Prevalent in both archetypal and religious literature, the journey motif weaves its way through tales of human growth—stories which grapple with the processes of how people come to be and to know. Reflecting patterns which occur in numerous traditional tales, Joseph Campbell's summation of the archetypal monomyth centers around a young man who leaves home in search of adventure (Moore, 1997, p. 34).<sup>1</sup> Many biblical stories also feature individuals who follow this pattern. For example, the Old Testament's Abraham leaves the comfort of his home in Ur of the Chaldees to venture into the unknown after receiving a divine call (Genesis 12). Such stories reflect the basic human storyline of human development within Western culture, which is one of separation—or a breaking of relational ties.

While the canon contains numerous quest stories, for the most part these tales are limited to journeys which center on men. When asked if mythic traditions exclude women from protagonists' roles, Joseph Campbell commented that the emphasis on male heroes in archetypal stories reflects “the conditions of life,” since the woman is in the home” (McKethan, 1990, p. 39). To Campbell's mind, the exclusion of young women from significant and active participation within quest stories represents a life

“norm.” Symbolically, however, if young men must leave home in search of adventure in order to reach adulthood, then women's exclusion from such adventures implies that they remain in a state of perpetual adolescence. Thus, the need for stories which feature both women as protagonists and alternative journey patterns is evident.

Such images of identity formation and knowledge construction hold significant implications for the field of education. As Dwayne Huebner (1993) notes,

We do not need “learning theory” or “developmental theory” to explain human change... The question that educators need to ask is not how people learn and develop, but what gets in the way of the great journey—the journey of the self or soul. Education is a way of attending to and caring for that journey (p. 405).

Huebner's statement demands much from the educational community, in that it calls for a complete paradigm shift. However, before such significant shifts are made, it is vital that conventional journey patterns be re-envisioned. Rather than promote a unitary quest which exclusively emphasizes separation, individuation, and male heroes, it is important to investigate and to construct new possibilities that consider the experiences of women and other marginalized peoples. Once images of journey are reconceptualized, this life metaphor will hold the potential to refocus our emphasis in education from mere “schooling” to a growth process which is lifelong, unpredictable, multifaceted, contradictory—even mysterious. Also embedded in both the metaphor of life as a journey and in the notion that education is a means of caring for that journey is the conviction that our knowing emerges from the specific contexts and relationships that comprise our lives. The concept of a journey, then, is of the utmost importance, for unless we embrace the idea that the ways in which we come to know are diverse and

complex, we will forever reduce education to mere “schooling,” or the attainment of decontextualized skills.

In my own life, I have discovered that examining specific life stories—both on an individual basis and communally with students—often provides important clues concerning the ways in which others have traveled through obstacles within their unique journeys “of the self or soul.” The focus of this particular study is the life journey of the once well known nineteenth-century American novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789 - 1867). Using her most popular novel Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts (1827) as a primary source, I will gather clues regarding how a woman I have come to know as a scholar–artist–teacher negotiated her own journey of the self or soul.

#### Race and an American Journey

While Sedgwick’s journey emerged to a large extent from her reshaping of culturally prescribed gender limitations, it was also largely influenced by the ways in which she grappled with issues of race. Interestingly, it was her rather conservative father, Theodore Sedgwick, whose legal defense of the enslaved Elizabeth Freeman (also known as “Mumbet” or “Mah Bet”) resulted in the abolishment of slavery in Massachusetts (Foster, 1974, p. 29). Subsequently, Freeman was hired by the Sedgwicks as their housekeeper, and Catharine’s journal entries reveal that “Mumbet” was a far greater influence in her life than her own mother (Foster, 1974, p. 29). Perhaps it was—at least in part—these childhood experiences that enabled a socially elite,

early nineteenth-century woman of British descent to suspect that race was a socially constructed category.<sup>2</sup>

Pinar (1993) notes that “race originates in the ‘gap’ between self and other” (p. 61). It was this “gap” that Sedgwick sought to explore, bridge, and reshape within Hope Leslie (1827). Searching for clues that might speak of Native American voices and perspectives within early national histories, Sedgwick integrated her re-envisioning of gender with her reshaping of racial constructs through her decision to tell the story of “the Pequod War” from a Native American woman’s perspective. Sedgwick’s interweaving of race, gender, and history indicates her understanding that our historical (and therefore personal) identities are “deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness,” and that the so-called “other’s” stories also speak of our own lives (Pinar, 1993, p. 61). Interestingly, Carol Mattingly (1998) notes that “Sedgwick addresses social issues that few other writers address until much later in the century...” (p. 157).

#### Gender and an American Journey

Referring to the work of Goodman, Bruner (1986) explains that human beings receive pre-existing “cultural givens,” or inherited storylines upon birth, which play a large role in determining identity formation (p. 97). Young women who are born into a culture in which storylines (or a lack thereof) imply that they are incapable of adventure or of attaining full adulthood inherit formidable obstacles to their growth. Unfortunately, it is this unbalanced cultural script which is currently presented to students and teachers as the “norm,” for in spite of the fact that by the middle of the

nineteenth-century American women writers far exceeded male writers both “commercially and numerically,” the current nineteenth-century American literary canon is devoid of women *novelists* (Baym, p. 4, 1992). Therefore, as Joyce Warren (1984) explains, “The woman reader must identify with the male protagonist in order to find a role model...”(p. 3). Unfortunately, the majority of canonized American literature reflects the cultural bias towards separation, in that it portrays the American experience as something *men* act out “apart from society and from women” (Warren, 1984, p. 2). Viewed as an obstacle to the realization of *the* American journey, the woman reader cannot identify with the men in a typical novel, because to do so means that she must “identify against herself” (Warren, 1984, p. 3). Rather than force young women (or anyone else) to align themselves with ill-fitting life journeys, a far better course is to recover storylines which incorporate the life experiences of women, for it is from such cultural storylines that our identities can be formed.

Indeed, many nineteenth-century American women's novels depict journey patterns which differ greatly from cultural “norms” of individuation and separation (Pratt, 1981, p. 6). Aside from the additional obstacles women faced due to their secondary social status, another important deviation from the “American” norm was that most communicated an awareness of human interconnection or the need for community. While novelists such as Catharine Sedgwick acknowledged the value of independent thinking, her most powerful protagonists—both female and male—also constructed life philosophies and exhibited personal agency with the needs of their communities in mind. What is significant about recognizing alternative journeys such as

Sedgwick's is that by doing so inherited cultural storylines are altered. No longer is the myth of growth through separation—or more specifically, the American story of extreme individualism—intact. New voices have been heard, and who we are after hearing them is not the same.

That new stories alter our cultural perspectives and re-inform our identities is of vital importance to education. Indeed, it is by interacting with new texts, whether living or literary, that we potentially come to know and to change. As Dwayne Huebner (1993) writes “the process of being educated is always a consequence of encountering something that is strange and different, something that is not me”(408). Paradoxically, it is often within what is “strange” that we meet unknown aspects of ourselves—reminders of our own experiences. For instance, due to the fact that Sedgwick’s (and other nineteenth-century women novelists’) work emphasizes human interconnection, those who have been socialized to value the individualistic male hero as the “norm” will perhaps be struck by this apparent “difference.” However those readers who have difficulty negotiating their lives within an individualistic mindset will also experience this apparent literary “abnormality” as one that is actually better aligned with their own experiences.

That it is beneficial to both women and men to disrupt dominant cultural perspectives which are biased towards traits of individuation and separation is clear. Gilligan (1998) notes that such biases and stereotypes “reflect a conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than

toward the interdependence of love and care” (p. 17). Such distortions are woven throughout the fabric of current American culture. Hence, it is of the utmost importance to recover stories that not only portray independent action, but also demonstrate a concern for community.

### One Woman's Journey

Shortly after my path became entwined with Sedgwick's, I began to suspect that perhaps the most significant moments within a journey pass quietly or even escape unnoticed, for it was a seemingly mundane decision to browse through a set of library shelves that resulted in my own unexpected yet significant meeting with Sedgwick and her once widely read novel Hope Leslie (1827). As I became better acquainted with her life and work, Sedgwick's current invisibility in the pages of American literature and cultural history was disturbing. Further investigation revealed that during the nineteenth century not only was Sedgwick quite influential, but her work also received both critical and popular acclaim. In 1820 the British critic Sidney Smith queried “In the four corners of the globe, who reads an American book?” Less than a decade later, four American authors were heralded internationally: Bryant, Cooper, Irving, and *Sedgwick*.<sup>3</sup>

While especially pleased that Hope Leslie (1827) was authored by a woman and portrayed strong women characters, The American Ladies Magazine—along with other periodicals such as the North American Review—were also enthusiastic about Sedgwick's work because they perceived it as having a positive influence on the new republic's emerging culture (Kelley, 1987, x).<sup>4</sup> After the successful introduction of Hope Leslie in 1827, The American Ladies Magazine declared “a hundred years hence, when

other and gifted competitors have crowded into the field, our country will still be proud of her name” (Kelley, 1987, x). Doubtlessly, Sedgwick's contemporaries would have been quite surprised by her current invisibility within American literature. Not only was she a highly esteemed author in her own right, but as the social leader of the American Lake District (her home region in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts) she also contributed to the artistic lives of other writers, authors, and reformers. As Foster (1974) notes, “There were many aspiring writers who would have considered it a mark of distinction to secure an opportunity for tea with Miss Sedgwick in the Berkshires” (p. 20). Well established international scholars and writers such as Fredrika Bremer from Sweden, Harriet Martineau from England, and Washington Irving from New York were eager to visit the Sedgwick household in Stockbridge, as well. Interestingly, it was also at one of Sedgwick's famous teas that Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville began their long-standing literary friendship, for they met when a group of guests hiked to sacrifice rock, a setting made famous due to its prominence in Hope Leslie (1827) (Foster, 1974, pp. 36 - 37).<sup>5</sup>

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's life and work were clearly influential to the growth of American literature; however, her representations of diverse American journeys—particularly within Hope Leslie (1827)—are also of great importance because they relate to key concerns in curriculum theory. Embedded within Sedgwick's novel are not only autobiographical facets of her emerging self and culture, but also characters and storylines whose presence elicit questions such as: Whose knowledge counts? Who can be a knower? And how do we come to know?



As Sedgwick's protagonists work through ideologies and situations which block their life journeys, she also unwinds her own story or vision of American culture—past, present, and future. Hope Leslie (1827) depicts Sedgwick's journey of the self or soul and her vision of American cultural history as emerging from within a reciprocal relationship. What is especially important about this image of journey is its implication that within human growth there is an interconnection between cultural / historical understandings and personal identity formation. Long before narrative theorists began to do so, Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) pointed to the notion that who we are emerges (in part) from those cultural assumptions and prevalent storylines which consistently encompass our attempts at meaning making (Bruner 1986, Gilbert 1992, Taylor 1996). In other words, the popular storylines, historical “truths,” and life assumptions which we inherit as members of a culture form our perceptions of reality. Theorist Pam Gilbert (1992) explains that through “constant repetition and layering story patterns and logic become almost 'naturalized' as truths and common sense...” (p. 128). Once such “truths” are woven into a culture, it is difficult both to dislodge or reshape them (Bruner, 1986, p. 36; Gilbert, 1992, p. 130). Therefore, dominant literary themes and historical interpretations—which inform and undergird cultural assumptions—are embraced as reality and rarely questioned.

Surrounded by the Jacksonian period's political emphasis on “rugged individualism” and stories of colonists' “heroic” militarism against indigenous peoples, Sedgwick used Hope Leslie (1827) as a challenge to the cultural and historical “realities” from which she emerged. Set in a Puritan colony during the early seventeenth

century, her novel offered nineteenth-century readers an opportunity to re-envision the United States' historical past—especially in regard to women and indigenous peoples—with the intention of informing their present (and subsequently future) cultural understandings and identities. Over 170 years after its original publication, Hope Leslie (1827) still possesses the potential to challenge cultural assumptions and inform life journeys.

Indeed, woven throughout my life are literary tales, history—even family stories—which give claim to a past and a present that emerge from self-sufficiency or “rugged individualism.” Although appreciative of family accomplishments and entertained by some canonized works, storylines which idealized total self-sufficiency were never completely aligned with my own experiences or ideas of “success.” Therefore, I was intrigued by the alternative patterns within Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827), for she constructed images of American journeys that not only valued independent action, but also emphasized community. Far different from journeys typically celebrated within American literature classes, Hope Leslie (1827) suggests that healthy growth requires a respect for human interconnection.

Not only does Sedgwick’s life approach provide a better reflection of my own experiences—and I suspect those of many other women—than does “rugged individualism,” but her work also depicts many diverse obstacles that must be negotiated within a woman’s journey due to culturally imposed gender restraints. Recovered storylines such as Sedgwick’s hold the potential to disrupt cultural assumptions, to allow readers to re-envision the historical past, and to locate keys to

present journeys. What is particularly important about Sedgwick's work is not whether it is representative of the experiences of all women—a question of essentialism—but that her novel contains clues regarding how one woman negotiated the obstacles within her own life journey.

In order to detect the ways in which Sedgwick composed her journey, it is necessary to explore more specifically the cultural context from which she emerged. Therefore, in the next section I will step away from a direct examination of Sedgwick's life and novel in order to describe some of the cultural and literary influences which contributed to the growth of the currently familiar "rugged individualism" in the United States. As Joyce Warren (1984) notes, it was during the nineteenth century that individualism "took hold and flourished in America," and yet in the midst of this cultural climate Sedgwick and many other women writers produced works which depicted social perspectives and life experiences that contrasted sharply with extreme individualism (p. 5). Having noted that theorists such as Bruner (1986) and Gilbert (1994) propose that it is difficult to dislodge, reshape—and at times even question—pervasive cultural scripts, the fact that women such as Sedgwick not only challenged the individualistic journey, but also aimed much of their writing at influencing their readers' views, suggests the importance of attending to those aspects of nineteenth-century culture which contributed to Sedgwick's (and other women's) alternative images of journey.

### Individualistic Journeys<sup>6</sup>

At the center of nineteenth-century America's intellectual life was a desire to separate from the Old World, for it was believed that with the genesis of America “life and history [were] just beginning” (Lewis, 1955, p. 5). R. W. B. Lewis (1955) notes that Americans viewed “the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race” (p. 5). Indeed, during this time Edward Everett's widely received “prescription for national health” was the phrase “*separation from Europe*—separation from its history and its habits” (Lewis, 1955, p. 5).

Producing a “unique” national literature was of great concern to nineteenth-century America, so it is little wonder that a literary hero who was “untouched and undefiled” by familial connections or a European past would emerge from this atmosphere. Later labeled “the American Adam,” this literary prototype's life journey exemplified separation and individuation, and his individualistic characteristics were equated with those of an “authentic American.” Although R. W. B. Lewis (1955) notes various differences in how this character type is portrayed within the American canon, in The American Adam he explains that it can be generally identified as “Adam before the Fall” (p. 5). While the prince or king of classical literature stands at the center of the world, Lewis (1955) notes that as an individual who is “liberated” from history, the “innocent,” or inexperienced,<sup>7</sup> American hero “takes his start outside the world” (p. 128). Capable of total self-sufficiency, the American hero's life journey does not consist of “an initiation *into* society, [but] an initiation *away from it...*” (p. 115).<sup>8</sup> Although he frequently interacts with particular communities on a short term basis, the Adamic

character is always an “outsider,” for liberty can only be found in pure open spaces (i.e. the wilderness, the sea, or the frontier) far removed from the entanglements of domesticity and civilization (Lewis, 1955, p. 128). It is separation from society, not attempts at social unity which propel the American Adam’s mythic journey.

Unfortunately, there is little room for the agency of women within this picture, for upon their arrival the Adamic hero’s once “uncivilized” frontier becomes domesticated, and social interdependence complicates his ideal vision of “pure” individualism and self-sufficiency.

The image of this supposedly ideal life perspective or journey is problematic on many levels (some of which I will discuss at a later point in this chapter). However, what it communicates regarding women is especially disturbing. Not only does this storyline depict women as obstacles to the growth of men, but even more significantly such images of “heroism” and identity construction exclude women and minorities from active participation in their own life quests. As Joyce Warren (1984) comments,

Women, blacks, Indians, and other “others” had no place in the drama of American individualism. Like the legendary Narcissus, the American individualist focused on his own image to such an extent that he could grant little reality to others (p. 4).

In short, those nineteenth-century novelists (and later twentieth-century critics) who promoted a completely self-sufficient Adamic character were so intent upon constructing an image of American growth and leadership that could be equated with separation and self-sufficiency, that those whose voices complicated this vision were conveniently pushed to the margins of both literary and political storylines.

Indeed, such exclusivity became a patriotic “norm.” Warren (1984) notes that Andrew Jackson’s presidential election in 1829 initiated a watershed of support for ideologies which emphasized individual rights over social unity (p. 5). In 1839 the Democratic Review asserted that within American society “the individual man in himself [is] an independent end” (Warren, 1984, p. 5). Therefore, the American Adam’s symbolic quest –or the white male / rugged individualist’s illusive journey– continued to gain strength. Over a century later, journeys based upon separation and individuation are still touted as the “normal” path towards maturity.

#### “Misplaced” Journeys

However, the presence of Sedgwick’s novel—along with those of additional nineteenth-century women—gives clear testimony to the fact that even in the midst of Jacksonian America, the voices of many “others” spoke of differing life experiences—of alternative journeys.<sup>9</sup> As “secondary characters in the drama of the American individualist,” women constituted what Warren (1984) describes as “a distinct culture, a culture separate from the national (male) culture. They were a part of, but apart from, the competitive world of business and industry and the adventure of Jacksonian individualism” (p. 8). Paradoxically, it was women’s exile from “the adventure of Jacksonian individualism”—their status as “other”—which brought many into a closer community with other women.<sup>10</sup>

The increased popularity of a “separate spheres” ideology, which taught that women and men were naturally suited for different domains of influence, also contributed to the development of a distinct women’s culture. Women were to influence

moral and domestic matters within the home, while men were charged with the economic and political concerns of the public sphere, for “true women”—or so the story went—should be happy to keep the home pure for the benefit of “toil worn” men (Pinar, in press). Warren (1984) notes that the constraining qualities attributed to a “true woman,” or a “lady” included “the virtues of submissiveness, piety, purity, and domesticity” (p. 8). Once again, women were given a secondary status in order to complement the individualistic purposes of men, for with the rapid onslaught of industrialization—followed by an increased enthusiasm for capitalism—women remaining within the home represented both stability and status (Warren, 1984, p. 8).<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, the constraints suffered by women due to the separate spheres ideology—along with its complementary “cult of the lady”—crossed all classes and regions (Warren, 1984, p. 9). Even women who physically crossed the boundaries of their socially prescribed sphere—such as mid-nineteenth-century factory women, new immigrants, and free African-American women<sup>12</sup>—were still socially and psychologically “bounded” by “true womanhood.” For example, Joyce Warren (1984) explains that

Although forced to forgo the virtue of domesticity by the necessity to work outside the home (as well as in the home), belief in the importance of proper feminine behavior was so prevalent that working-class women were sometimes prevented from organizing and unionizing to better their situation because of their allegiance to the ideal of the lady (p. 9).

Those who did thwart domestic ideals were of course subject to social—if not economic—censor.

Nineteenth-century women often lived paradoxical lives in which community was forged from exile. Separated from the power and benefits of the public domain,

women formed their own “culture” based on the experiences women shared in common (Warren, 1984, p. 8). Therefore, it should not be surprising that within such a cultural climate, the journeys of many women would exemplify an ability to creatively handle contradictions. For example, many women who claimed to fully embrace the “limited” domestic realm, did so in order to redefine its meaning and to expand their gender’s influence. Reform-minded writers such as Sedgwick reasoned that if women were naturally predisposed towards guarding the morality of the home, then they were also especially qualified to guard the morality of American culture at large. Therefore, by embracing the cult of domesticity’s stance on women’s moral superiority, Sedgwick (along with many other women) built a rationale for women’s active involvement in “public” concerns that impacted the development of American culture. By so doing, she and others exposed public / private dualisms as being false dichotomies, rather than “natural” situations. Significantly, it is through the act of writing that Sedgwick worked out the expansion of women’s domestic sphere into the public domain.

#### A Site for the Journey

Like many nineteenth-century women who wished to actively influence American culture, Sedgwick selected the safety of a novel—a supposed “fiction”—as a means to depict her alternative journey. Her use of the novel as a site for negotiating life obstacles is of remarkable importance, for her reshaping of dominant cultural perspectives illustrates ways in which writing enabled women to question cultural givens, and to creatively construct alternative journeys. As Lucinda MacKethan (1990) writes, “We can view the act of writing as an act of separation, an act of leaving home”



(p. 37). Separated from old home perceptions—from cultural assumptions—writers such as Sedgwick were able to realize new life perspectives. The novel form became for her “an agent of interpretation,” as well as an “agent of re-interpretation, not only giving form but also altering accepted forms” (p. 12). In other words, the novel is a creative site from which women writers often reshaped patriarchal or cultural “givens” in order to align aspects of their outer worlds with the inner worlds they were constructing.

Nineteenth-century women’s novels also tend to be paradoxical, in that they act as vehicles for both separation and connection. While novels offer sites for women to separate from possibly destructive cultural assumptions, they also enable women to build bridges between themselves and others (MacKethan, 1990, p. 38). Filled with explicit and implicit social encouragement and instruction to their female readerships, many nineteenth-century women’s sentimental writings expanded women’s sphere of influence by providing readers with potential guideposts for their life journeys.

Unfortunately, there are currently few readers who have benefitted from Sedgwick’s “guideposts” since her novels have been ignored throughout the twentieth century. Having inherited a literary dichotomy that excludes women’s writings, our cultural perceptions are distorted. Familiarity with writings such as Sedgwick’s, then, provides us with missing pieces—from our larger cultural stories and from ourselves. Throughout this study I will of course refer to Hope Leslie’s (1827) plot and characters. Therefore before entering into additional discussions, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the novel’s plot.

Although the majority of Sedgwick's novel unfolds in colonial Massachusetts, it opens in London where a young Puritan, William Fletcher, had fallen in love with his cousin Alice. When Alice's Anglican father, Sir William, discovers that his nephew will not refute his "fanatical notions of liberty and religion" and pledge loyalty to the king, he exiles him from the family. Unwilling to compromise his convictions, William books passage on a ship headed for the New World. However, just as the ship is about to set sail Alice arrives at the dock and the two decide to be secretly married by the ship's captain. William boards the ship to make the arrangements, and just as he is returning to shore, the king's guard (sent by Sir William) force Alice into a carriage and whisk her from the scene. Heartbroken, young William defers his trip. Two weeks later he is informed that Sir William has forced Alice to marry Sir Charles Leslie. Eventually, William is persuaded to marry a "godly" orphan Martha, and several years later, in 1630, he and his family—along with Governor John Winthrop—set sail for the Puritan settlement of Boston.

However, William is soon disillusioned by the politics of his new Puritan community, and he moves his family to the frontier settlement of Bethel. In spite of her new home's isolation, the dutiful Martha Fletcher—who is representative of the ideal Puritan wife—makes no complaint. Soon after, when her husband informs her that they are about to adopt the two orphaned daughters of his first love Alice, she agrees without question. Due to Martha's enlarged household, Governor Winthrop agrees to send two young Pequod captives to live with the family as servants: Magawisca who is the daughter of the Pequod chief and her brother Oneco.

William Fletcher then travels to Boston to meet his two adopted daughters, Alice and Mary, whom he rechristens Hope and Faith. Due to business matters Fletcher is detained. He decides to keep Hope and her schoolmaster Mr. Craddock with him, and he sends the bashful Faith, her Aunt Grafton, Magawisca, and Oneco to Bethel. However, after they leave he becomes extremely ill, so it is “three seasons” before he and Hope Leslie are able to journey to Bethel.

During his absence, the Fletcher home is attacked by Pequods who are seeking revenge for the Puritans’ earlier massacre in Mystic, Connecticut. This onslaught is led by Mononotto who is Magawisca and Oneco’s father. In spite of Magawisca’s pleas, Martha Fletcher and some her children are killed. Her fifteen-year-old son Everell and Faith Leslie are captured. Previous to this attack, Magawisca had shared her account of the Pequod Wars—more appropriately dubbed “the massacre at Mystic”—with Everell Fletcher.

After realizing that her father plans to kill Everell, Magawisca risks her life to save him. In the process, she loses her arm, but Everell goes free. After being reunited with his family, he travels to Suffolk, England to be educated in the home of his mother’s brother. He is absent for five years.

During Everell’s absence, the elderly “mother” Nelema, is unjustly imprisoned and sentenced to death by the Puritan community. Hope Leslie rescues her, and a grateful Nelema promises to restore her sister, Faith, to her. When Hope’s deed is discovered, she is sent to live with Governor Winthrop’s family, for it is believed that through the influence of his wife Margaret and her niece Esther Downing, Hope will

develop the “virtue” of feminine passivity. Although this experiment is not successful, Hope and Esther become confidential friends in spite of their differences.

However unknown to Hope, Esther has been in love with Everell for years. At one point when she was on the verge of death, Esther confessed her feelings to him. When Everell returns from England, Hope misinterprets her two friends’ awkwardness and impulsively pushes an engagement. Due to miscommunication, Esther and Everell actually become engaged, and even when the honorable Everell (who loves Hope) realizes that Hope loves him, he will not break his promise of marriage to Esther.

The confusion is heightened by the arrival of the manipulative Sir Philip Gardiner. Unknown to the community, Sir Philip’s page is actually a Rosa, a disguised young woman whom he seduced and abandoned. His marked attention to Hope reveals that he has similar plans for her. However, Hope is unimpressed with his advances and preoccupied with finding her lost sister. Her determination to find Faith results in secret meetings with Magawisca. As a result of one of these meetings, Magawisca is arrested by fearful Puritans.

Upon hearing of her plight, a grateful Everell plots to rescue his friend. Loyal to the patriarchal authority of their community, Esther refuses to help Everell save the innocent Magawisca. Soon after, she realizes that Everell loves Hope and graciously breaks their engagement.

In the end, Hope and Everell do get married, but as Christopher Castiglia (1989) explains, their union is not depicted as “the perfect closure to a heroine’s life and of a woman author’s narrative,” for Sedgwick minimizes the importance of the marriage by

supplying numerous details about the lives of even minor characters, while choosing to refrain from a description of the actual wedding (p. 10). The last words of her unconventional close explain that “marriage is not essential to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of woman” (p. 350). Having unraveled a general sketch of Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827), I now turn to the questions which will guide my study

A Novel Focus

The following questions constitute my general framework for examining Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827) as a site for constructing curriculum theory:

1. What can Hope Leslie (1827) tell us regarding the relationship between women’s history, culture, and identity?
2. What does Sedgwick’s life approach as it is evident in her writings imply regarding approaches to reconstructing cultural and literary history?
3. What implications can be drawn from Sedgwick’s life and historical novel Hope Leslie (1827) in terms of informing curriculum?

I have long been interested in a woman’s quest, and exploring Sedgwick’s novel for clues concerning how she came to be and to know is one way to conceptualize what for the most part have been invisible journeys. In her study involving over three hundred nineteenth-century women’s novels, Armiss Pratt (1981) noted that the story structures of the women’s writings were vastly different from conventional quest patterns which are based on individualistic interests. Pratt (1981) stated that even in the most conservative women’s novels there was an underlying resistance to the low expectations their culture afforded them. At every turn blockages to growth seemed to

frustrate their efforts. In terms of her own life, and of the lives of both nineteenth-century and present-day women in general, Pratt (1981) explains

Our quests for being are thwarted on every side by what we are told to be and do, which is different from what men are told to be and to do: when we seek an identity based on human personhood rather than on gender, we stumble about in a landscape whose signposts indicate retreats from, rather than ways to, adulthood (p. 6).

According to Pratt (1981), then, perhaps the most difficult obstacle to negotiate in “the journey of the self or the soul” is a want of guidance, a lack of support. The thought of disrupting cultural assumptions, of searching old stories for “new” guideposts in order to bridge disconnectedness and to encourage growth is significant to education—to our work of removing obstacles within life journeys.

### An Overview of the Journey

Having established the importance of re-envisioning conceptions of journey and of gathering clues from Hope Leslie (1827) regarding the ways in which Catharine Maria Sedgwick negotiated her life quest, I will move to Chapter Two. Entitled “Autobiographical Conversations with Catharine Sedgwick,” Chapter Two explores the notion that in writing about Sedgwick’s life, I also tell my own story. Spiraling between my own journey and that of Sedgwick’s, I make note of what another nineteenth-century woman, Arozina Perkins, describes as a “third eye” or “third” way of seeing the world, in which restrictive cultural binaries are reshaped for the purpose of constructing new possibilities. Chapter Two also deals with the ways in which themes such as the imagination, reading living and literary texts, schooling, resistance to patriarchy,

reinterpreting the story of Adam and Eve, as well as balancing contradictions are woven throughout both my own and Sedgwick's personal journeys.

Moving towards Sedgwick's larger observations of her culture, Chapter Three explores the ways in which Sedgwick's depiction of both her cultural vision and her characterization of New American Eves in Hope Leslie (1827) acts as a response to James Fenimore Cooper's cultural vision and his depiction of an American Adam within The Last of the Mohicans (1827). Sedgwick's re-interpretation of the Adam and Eve story detailed in this chapter not only implies how influential interpretations of this biblical story have been in the lives of Western women, but it also highlights major differences between Sedgwick and Cooper. Cooper emphasized "rugged individualism," the displacement of indigenous peoples, and exclusive white male leadership; whereas, Sedgwick emphasized community, interracial cooperation, and the importance of women's leadership.

Chapter Four highlights the ways in which Hope Leslie (1827) acted as experimental ground for Sedgwick's cultural (and therefore personal) identity construction. In particular, this chapter highlights the subversive strategies Sedgwick and other women employed as they wrote their lives against a patriarchal culture and within a conventionally "masculine" literary format.

In Chapter Five, I discuss Sedgwick's attempts to find the forgotten voices of the Pequods within both Puritan and early national historical narratives. Through her use of testimony and the imagination, Sedgwick attempts to disrupt her readers' biased historical assumptions. In addition, this chapter attends to the ways in which she

demonstrates that our understandings of the past inform our present and future life journeys. Indeed, Sedgwick also revisits the past in order to re-imagine new possibilities for women and indigenous peoples within Chapter Six. In this chapter I demonstrate that Sedgwick embraced cultural stereotypes of Native Americans for the purpose of reshaping them. In addition, I describe some of the ways that such stereotypes developed, and demonstrate how they inform our cultural / personal identity formation or life journeys.

Finally, in Chapter Seven I unwind some of the clues to Sedgwick's journey that I have gathered from Hope Leslie (1827). Once again, I emphasize our cultural need for images of alternative journeys.

#### End Notes

1. Scholars interested both in Celtic studies and in theology have recently recovered an image of journey, *peregrinatio*, which differs from the archetypal monomyth. Peregrinatio, or the holistic life approach of early Celtic Christians, says much about our processes of becoming and offers both women and men an alternative to what current cultural myths communicate regarding who we are and how we come to know. While it was the practice of fully committed peregrini to separate from home, they did so with an awareness of their interconnection with others, the land, the many aspects of their own selves, and God. Not only did both women and men embark on such journeys, but their holistic quests required a balance between independence (a desire for differing degrees of solitude and a willingness to leave their original homes) and community (DeWaal, 1997, pp. 2, 40).
2. In terms of indigenous peoples, Kelley (1987) explains that Sedgwick "rejected the very premise sustaining the dichotomy between civilization and savagery and stated bluntly that 'elements of virtue and intellect' were just as visible in Indians as in the Europeans and their descendants" (xxix).
3. At home in the United States, Sedgwick's work appealed to a wide range of readers. Children and young adults appear to have been drawn to Hope Leslie (1827) due to its lively plot and Sedgwick's inclusion of both heroines and heroes (Kelley, 1987, x). As late in the century as 1897, critic Donald G. Mitchell recalled in his American Lands and



Letters how sixty years earlier when he was a “school-boy” he and his friends “devoured its [Hope Leslie's] pages (Kelley, 1987, xi).

4. While the majority of periodicals gave Sedgwick's works—and in particular Hope Leslie (1827)—a positive review, there were others who did not approve of her favorable depiction of Native Americans. Biographer Mary Kelley (1987) reports that the Western Monthly Review communicated resentment for Sedgwick's characterization of Magawisca when they complained, “we should have looked in any place for such a character, rather than in an Indian wigwam” (x).

5. Catharine Sedgwick's “inner circle” in the Berkshires included two of her sisters-in-law, Susan Anne Sedgwick and Elizabeth Dwight Sedgwick, as well as the British actress Fanny Kemble (Foster, 1874, p. 20). While she spent most of her time with her family and these three women, Sedgwick greatly enjoyed the wider literary company of the Berkshires. Aside from the Sedgwick's actual hospitality, it was understood in nineteenth-century literary circles that the great attraction to the Berkshires was not so much its natural beauty, but the fact that Sedgwick included descriptions of the area in her writing. In 1855, the Cyclopedia of American Literature stated that “The widespread celebrity of Stockbridge is to be ascribed far more to reputation which Miss Sedgwick's descriptions and works have given it, than to its natural advantages” (Foster, 1974, p. 36).

6. Separation, or a breaking of relational ties, is the basic pattern for life journeys within Western culture. Conventional psychological research based on patterns of male development indicate that children mature through separation and individuation. Traditional tales relate a similar message. For example, Joseph Campbell's summation of the archetypal monomyth depicts a young man who leaves home in search of adventure, while the psycho-mythical studies of Carl Jung and Northrup Frye also present separation and individuation as the “normal” path towards maturity (Moore, 1997, p. 34; Pratt, 1973, p. 34). It is not surprising, then, that the nineteenth-century literary identity and life quest which twentieth-century critics and scholars would choose to celebrate (to the exclusion of others) as the image of the “authentic American”—often labeled the American Adam—would also depict separation and individuation as the ideal or “norm” in terms of life journeys.

7. Lewis (1955) describes the New Adam as “innocent” because the character is viewed as being close to humanity's “natural state,” or that perfect and complete state of being before the Fall.

8. In particular, Lewis (1955) cites this journey pattern in the works of Poe, Cooper, Anderson, and Hemingway. To describe this inversion of social initiation he coins the term *denitiation* (p. 115).

9. Unlike many other Transcendentalists, Margaret Fuller refused to celebrate the development of the individual self if it was at the expense of others. Her politics and writings consistently demonstrated an awareness of human interconnection, in that she opposed western expansion and the displacement of indigenous peoples (Warren, 1984, p. 86). E.D.E.N. Southworth also used her novels to emphasize the importance of community.

10. Nancy Cott explains that, “the intended cultural invisibility of women led instead to a strong cultural presence, giving rise to the sense of a specifically female identity that made American feminism possible” (Castiglia, 1989, p. 4).

11. The promotion of a separate spheres ideology not only aided men in their pursuit of wealth, but it also served to pacify middle class women whose roles in an industrialized society appeared to be less meaningful. Madeleine Grumet (1988) explains that “as industrialization spread, women who were once in charge of self-sufficient households,” were now left at home as their husbands went to work and their children went to school (p. 41). As Warren explains, the upper and middle class woman’s domesticity was “a gauge of male success.” Naturally a system which glorified domesticity increased the difficulty of working class women’s lives because they could not meet this social standard.

12. Warren (1984) notes that while we do know that restrictions on the Southern “lady” were even narrower than those placed on middle and upper class women of other regions, little is known about poor white women from the South.

## CHAPTER TWO

### (AUTO)BIOGRAPHICAL CONVERSATIONS WITH CATHARINE SEDGWICK

“Our relationships with the world and with each other are more mysterious than we care to admit” (Norris, 1996, p. 66).

*Recovering the stories of marginalized women is not only biographical in nature, but autobiographical as well. Spiraling back to the nineteenth century, I encounter details, themes—and sometimes patterns—which are woven throughout my life. Connections between the past and the present are quickened as aspects of my own self echo in the voices of others.*

“I dreamed I had three eyes—one new one in my left cheek just below the other...I looked in the glass, and thought about having the lashes pulled out, and sewing it up. Then I shut my old ones, and found that the sight was far more perfect, everything around me appeared in its true light and lovely beyond expression thro’ my new orb...I speculated much upon it, and finally concluded that this accounted for my seeing things differently from some people, or in other words for my being ‘visionary’” (The voice of Arozina Perkins) (*from* Polly Kaufman’s Women Teachers On the Frontier 1984, p. 76)

Labeled “visionary” and “enthusiastic” by patronizing friends who doubted the wisdom of her plans to travel West as a teacher, it was her imagination which strengthened twenty-three year old Arozina Perkins (1849) to continue with her journey. Grouping the daguerreotypes<sup>1</sup> of her absent family across a bedroom table, Arozina noted in her diary, “I talk to them, and look at them, till I fancy they are real, and almost expect their lips to move in answer to my questions” (Kaufman, 1984, p. 76). Working from an imagination inspired by her desire to serve, Arozina confessed to her “mother” that she wished to devote her life to what she described as “the cause of education and truth and religion in the far west” (Kaufman, 1984, p. 76).

Arozina's heartfelt dream resonates with me; so much so, that periodically I find myself returning to her diary entries. Listening to Arozina's voice, I encounter images of her third eye—images which speak of a way of knowing that like “poetry and prayer begin deep within a person, beyond the reach of language” (Norris, 1998, p. 143). It is from within this deep and mysterious place—the seat of the affect and of the spirit—that the imagination is first fed and directed, and it is through the imagination that “third” or new life perceptions are woven.

Although over one hundred and fifty years have passed since Arozina first recorded her dream, the way that I explore “new” texts is different because of my connection with her. I carry her image of the “third eye” with me as a way to make meaning of what others have written about their life journeys. Significantly, I sometimes encounter traces of Arozina's “third eye” in the works of other forgotten writers with whom I feel connected. Twenty-two years before Arozina made plans to journey west as a teacher, Catharine Maria Sedgwick wrote in Hope Leslie (1827) that “love can paint as well as fear;” and that “from her shadowy regions” *imagination* creates new “forms”—or new ways of seeing (p. 96). Although separated in terms of region, class, family support, social status—even age—their construction of a “third” imaginative eye— a different way of seeing—is an experience they share. Having become a part of my own outlook, Arozina's “third eye” is something that *I* share with Catharine Sedgwick as well. It is a useful thread from which many of my own imagined “conversations” with her are woven. Throughout the remainder of this chapter I will converse with Sedgwick about our points of connection as I piece together clues concerning the ways in which

our journeys have been negotiated. Once again, traces of the imagination's "third eye" will run throughout our conversation. "Our relationships with the world and with each other" are indeed "mysterious" (Norris, 1996, p. 66).

#### Conversations with Catharine Sedgwick

When I first heard the story of Adam and Eve as a child, I wondered at Adam's apparent stupidity. What was wrong with him? When the serpent talked Eve into eating from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," why did Adam passively accept the forbidden fruit from Eve's hands? Fortunately, I was a bit older before I heard other people's interpretations. As a young adolescent I made short work of the theory that Eve was deceived because she wandered away from Adam's protection (the text clearly implies that he was standing there the whole time). I was frustrated (and a bit incredulous) when I realized that there were many people who misused this and other stories to "prove" that I was weak. Little did I know that I was part of a long tradition of women who would reinterpret or reshape the role of the fallen Eve.

Catharine Sedgwick, I do not know how old you were when *you* first realized the power of that story on your culture's consciousness. Whether you were building from another woman's foundation, or whether you saw your own reworking as something wholly "new," you must have understood that what you offered the readers of Hope Leslie (1827) was a "third eye" or an alternative way of seeing the world. Traditional interpretations of our human genesis not only label Eve (and all of her daughters) as solely responsible for pain and suffering, but they also imply that because of her "weakness" she *belongs* in second place—a type of abnormal "norm" for women. I

think that what I like most about your story is that both Adam *and* Eve take journeys. You switch our focus from a cultural bias towards Pandora's Box to that first creation story in Genesis where God made both man *and woman* in his image—a wonderful argument for the normality of women's experiences.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, resisting culturally inherited limitations, your title character Hope is the “lawless girl”—the young woman with an active “third eye”—who imagines and then constructs a safe and vital place for both herself and others.

Woven from imagination—and from necessity—are the alternative paths you constructed for your feet. Emerging from experience and from prayer, your theories are more beautiful and more practical<sup>3</sup> than those of many later, recognized theorists. Similar to the “third eye”—or your own imaginative “new forms”—Michel Serres's (1997) river bank analogy also depicts the possibility of creatively negotiating third or “middle” possibilities. Leaving the security of the river bank—along with its cultural givens and familiar thinking—a swimmer must move towards a new unsupported place in the river's middle if she hopes to reach the other side. However, it is not on the opposite shore that she will experience the most growth, but during her swim across the river's unfamiliar territory. The swimmer must pass through an unknown “blank middle,” a point in which old “reference points lie equally far” away. With old supports and standpoints out of reach, a new way of perceiving the world comes to be (Serres, 1997, p. 7).

Both you and Serres point to a journey's process (rather than its supposed end) as the time when transformative possibilities are the most alive. Of course, you also share that “third” way of seeing; he writes of the “blank middle,” and you speak of

imagination's "shadowy regions" (p. 96). However, *you* look beyond the construction of "third" perceptions in order to examine the creative forces that initiate and inspire them. It's not that you simplify matters—you still describe the place where imagination originates as a "shadowy region"—it is just that like so many other nineteenth-century women novelists, you recognized the power of the affect. You noted "that love can paint as well as fear" because you saw how these emotions both initiated and influenced the various courses that imagination took in the lives of those around you. It is the seat of the affect and of the spirit that nourishes the imagination, and it is the imagination which holds the potential to construct "the third eye," that "new form" for seeing.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, I am told that out "of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternate realities" (Greene, 1997, p. 3). While I appreciate this statement, I think that we both see things a bit differently. Imagination is not merely *one* of our cognitive capacities, it is the vine from which all other mental functions draw their life.<sup>5</sup> As human beings we are creative; when that creativity is embodied, when it quickens new thoughts and produces new visions, *it is the imagination*.

Like a triple braided cord, the heart, the spirit, and the mind make the work of the imagination possible. As an adult, I cannot get away from the imagination's call; without consciously planning to, I find myself writing and thinking about it again and again. After reading Hope Leslie (1827) I suspect that you must have experienced a similar "adult" pull, for your protagonists depend upon their imaginations to re-envision restrictive—often painful—cultural givens. What is amazing to me is that as adolescents

this is their general mode of operation. Their journeys reflect feelings and actions which are confident, compassionate, and ambitious. I am told that this is the strong “stuff” from which many *pre*-adolescent girls weave their daily lives. The way they perceive the world prior to the realization that their gender is unaligned with culturally prevalent “norms” (Pipher, 1994, p. 18). Looking back, this rings true for me.

### Reading for Survival in Patriarchal Landscapes

My winter afternoons were usually spent huddled on the floor in front of a heavy duty space heater with a book and a box of cheese crackers. Hidden behind the door of an upstairs bathroom, I happily pulled new worlds from the pages of my novels. You spent winter afternoons in a similar fashion. To your niece Alice, you explained,

I was not more than twelve years old (I think but ten) when, during one winter, I read Rollin’s Ancient History. The walking to our school-house was often bad, and I took my lunch...and in the interim between the morning and p. m. school I crept under my desk (the desks were so made as to afford little close recesses under them) and read, and munched, and forgot myself in Cyrus’s greatness! (Kelley, 1993, p. 74).

Hidden away, we fed our imaginations. It was indeed a time to “forget ourselves,” but also a time to envision possibilities. Some have reported that childhood and adolescent reading became “grist for their mental grindings” (Taylor, 1996, p. 97). I wonder if Rollin’s Ancient History played a part in your eventual realization that who you were and what you wanted to become did not align with the systems and structures that surrounded you.

I would not be surprised if reading history underneath your desk at lunch time was the intellectual highlight of your day. Early years at school were a bit disappointing



for both of us. You actually called your school life “a waste!” Later you commented that within the confines of the many girls’ schools and academies that you attended, your mind “was not weakened by too much study” (Kelley, 1987, xvi). I was not truly bored until junior high school. Before that point, I dreaded the tyranny of rigid schedules and ceaseless work books. It was usually at home—what you referred to as the site of your “only education”—that I was afforded the opportunity to read what truly interested me.

Interestingly, both of us also had fathers who read to us consistently—a rare occurrence, I am told, for American girls (Kelley, 1987, xvii). Theodore Sedgwick entertained you with passages from Shakespeare and Cervantes; my father read stories from the Bible (Kelley, 1987, xvii). Shakespeare—along with old Broadway plays—were reserved for outdoor theatre in the summers. Although you did not see *your* first play until you were eleven, I am sure that your dramatic sensibilities were already well developed, for your nurse Mumbet regularly fed your imagination with local legends and ghost stories (Kelley, 1993, p. 90). It was my mother who read fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and picture story books to me each night before I fell asleep. I think that it would have been impossible to grow up in either of our houses without a strong sense of story.

Indeed, traces of childhood stories, books, movies, and plays continue to feed my adult goals and dreams. Rather than “grow out of them,” *they* grow with me. Familiar stories continue to act as a type of backdrop for my imagination. I sense something similar in your life. When you were very young one of the selections your

father read to the family in the evenings was Samuel Butler's Hudibras.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it was this satirical poem which initially led you to question the accuracy of early Puritan histories. It *must* have acted as a catalyst to your imagination when you first constructed alternative historical perspectives for your novel Hope Leslie (1827). Unlike the majority of early colonial histories, you did not depict your Puritan characters as heroes; however, with some exceptions, your colonial characters were not villains either. Moving between the oppositional stories of your youth, your imagination constructed a "third eye," or different way of seeing. In short, you held differing things together" and you did it "creatively so that the tensions [became] life giving" (DeWaal, 1998, ii). Once again your life speaks of the "third eye."

#### Negotiating False Dichotomies Within Patriarchal Landscapes

The ways in which you worked through destructive dualisms speaks to me of the relevance of your journey. Benedictine scholar Esther DeWaal's writings suggest the significance of your journey as well. She notes (1998) that

Today as I look around me I see a world in which there is not so much holding together as splitting apart. There is increasing polarization, whether in politics or in religion or in the divides within society itself. People seem to be building barricades to maintain their positions, unwilling to listen to other points of view... (iii).

Seeking to alter false dichotomies, or what is unnecessarily "adversarial and antagonistic," the Benedictines also speak of "listening with the ear of the heart." As DeWaal (1998) explains, it is a type of listening that involves "the whole of ourselves, our feelings, our emotions and *imagination*" (iii). Much like Arozina's "third eye," listening with "the ear of the heart;" reflects your journey, in that it holds out

possibilities for transformation through the work of the heart and the imagination. Portions of your story—aspects of life that I deem as important—echo in the voices of Benedictine scholars and are somehow reassuring. I search for clues that will explain how you came to know the connection between the imagination and the affect.<sup>7</sup> What was it that led you to suspect that when connected to a growing heart and spirit, the imagination could hold contradictory pieces together; that it could somehow construct a “third eye” for seeing life’s circumstances in new ways?

Finding clues to this part of your journey is especially important to me because the propensity of American culture for dichotomies frustrates me. Within my family rigid political dichotomies loom heavily overhead, and at times my desire for a peaceful holiday dinner necessitates that I push the mysteries, the mercies, and the ambiguities which I ponder underground. Your biographers acknowledge that your eventual “break” with your father’s conservative political views was difficult, but I am not certain if either Mary Kelley (1987, 1993) or Edward Halsey Foster (1974) can imagine how you felt when you and your father sat down to dinner. It is difficult to chew your food correctly when you are biting your tongue.

However, for the most part your resistance was not passive; it was creative. Your unwillingness to allow structural dichotomies to manipulate your thinking or to polarize your relationships affirms my own desire to “honor the truth where I find it,” to cultivate a practice of viewing the world through a “third eye” or a different way. In terms of conventional American politics, you left your father’s conservatism in order to adopt more egalitarian views, but you did not fully sympathize with “the opposition,”

or Jacksonian America. In Hope Leslie (1827) you construct “a challenge to the morality of a nation” regarding Western expansion and Indian displacement (Kelley, 1987, xxviii). Although a popular strand of the Democratic–Republican platform, forcing indigenous peoples to “relocate” did not reflect your perspective of democracy, which involved the inclusion of many voices. Like so many other women writers, you imagined alternative routes and standpoints when individualism ignored the reality of interconnection.

You also refused to set yourself in opposition to your father; instead, working from within you *imagined* the world from his point of view—a type of “third eye” thinking. To your niece Alice, you explained that your father’s distrust of “the people’s” ability to govern themselves—which he shared with his Federalist colleagues—was “the inevitable consequence of having been educated loyal subjects of a monarchical government” (Kelley, 1993, p. 64). From this standpoint you were able to value what you described as “your father’s earnest devotion to his country” (Kelley, 1993, p. 64). I have long appreciated Madeleine Grumet’s (1988) suggestion that rather than dismiss the lives of our mothers as being “too different,” we can like Virginia Woolf, “recognize what we transform,” and “love what we cannot, will not be” (p. 192). However, I think that similar acts of love and imagination are necessary in terms of our fathers. Constructing a third way of seeing rather than falling into an oppositional mode is probably necessary in just about any relationship—past or present. I suppose that we all require much practice if we are to begin to learn to “listen with the heart” (DeWaal, 1998, iii).

### Reading Lives

Carol Gilligan (1990) writes that “at the edge of adolescence, eleven- and twelve-year-old girls observe where and when women speak and when they are silent” (p. 25). In my own life, it was during pre-adolescence that I first realized that women were not afforded the same amount of respect as men in this world, and I was blessedly and unapologetically angry about it.<sup>8</sup> It was also during *your* early adolescent years that you broached this subject with your father. In a letter to Theodore, you complained that looking to him for life principles was like “turning from the survey of a lofty palace to find a model for a little dwelling,” arriving at the crux of the matter, you added “you may benefit a nation, my dear Papa, and I may improve the condition of a fellow being” (Gosset & Bardes, 1974, p. 25).

Lacking the support—the guidance—you needed to negotiate this early obstacle, this awareness of injustice, you turned to your father for help. While it is doubtful that the support he gave you was satisfactory, you were already looking for “a way out” of this inherited cultural limitation. So many girls “go underground” with what they are thinking and feeling in order to be accepted; you seemed to have maintained a “sense of self” (Gilligan, 1990, p. 14). I know that as a child you were often alone due to your mother’s severe depression and your father’s political career (Foster, 1974, p. 36). Interestingly, experience shows that many strong girls were “socially lonely and isolated during adolescence” (Pipher, 1994, p. 266). While your loneliness was due to family circumstances rather than to the usual rejection by peers, it is time away from social pressures which allows many adolescent girls to “develop their uniqueness” (Kelley,

1993, p. 75; Pipher, 1994, p. 266). As a military brat, I experienced a season of isolation every one-to-three years, and each time I entered a new world my demeanor was “quiet and guarded.” Like so many other “smart” girls my “rebellion was known to only a few trusted others” (Pipher, 1994, p. 266). I sense that you were the same. Being set apart just increases the intensity with which adolescent girls watch and read the lives of others. I think that in both of our journeys times of solitude allowed us to enter into community with a “third eye,” our own different ways of reading the world.

Throughout your life you also relied on the companionship of books, your four brothers, and other strong women for inspiration, so it is probable that you turned to these same sources during adolescence. I know that although I was not conscious of it, much of my own girlhood was spent searching for stories about how other women (both living and literary) negotiated their lives. Looking back, I realize that these life readings emerged as a result of my seeing a similar thirst within the books and people around me.<sup>9</sup>

In a passage of your autobiography written to your great niece Alice, you also imply how important opportunities to “read” the lives of strong women are to the identity formation of young women. In a portion of your autobiography which focuses on the free African-American housekeeper, Mumbet (Elizabeth Freeman), whom you regarded as a mother figure, you explain that those “who surround us in our childhood, whose atmosphere enfolds us, as it were, have more to do with the formation of our characters than all our didactic and preceptive education” (Kelley, 1993, p. 15). Perhaps it was Mumbet’s strong and active *character* which inspired you to seek

nourishment for your heart and imagination through the company of books and strong friendships. It was a strengthening process which never ended in your life, nor has it ended in mine.

### Imaginative Tensions

As with anything significant, a well-developed imagination harbors both potential problems and potential possibilities. For instance, seeing differently allows for different choices. During a time when nine out of ten women married—and a wife was considered to be “a necessity” for professional men—you chose to remain single. The value you placed on your friendships, your commitment to your writing career, and your intellectual and spiritual growth were the strands from which you wove your life.

However, deviating from the “norm” creates a conflict of values—if not for the person involved, then for the conventional individuals around her. Occasionally, you reassessed and tested your choices in a journal. At one point you confide, “I suspect no single woman living in the household of others has been happier” (Kelley, 1993, p. 156). Within other entries you mention your gratefulness for the many special friendships and family relationships that have been a part of your life. However, a sense of disappointment—of the unique tensions which seem to come when new roads are taken—is sometimes evident as well. At least within your private writing you had your own space—a place for reflection. Virginia Woolf notes that every woman needs “a room of her own”; as a single woman, you regretted not having a home of your own. To my mind, this speaks of our need for *solitude*—a time and a place in which to review and to alter our own stories. Spiraling back to our preteen years, I see that the habit of

hiding away to read in silence was a good one—one that might offer clues for current adult lives. It also demonstrates the creative balance we must strike between being separated and being in community, for unless I am “at home” with myself and with God it is difficult to give to others. While an unencumbered imagination holds out the possibility of constructing a “third eye” or new a way, it cannot erase life's tensions. Your journey makes that clear.

What is less clear is why there are times when the imagination fails us so completely. We have both watched enormously creative friends and sisters who could or would not imagine a “third” way for themselves.<sup>10</sup> I have read that “wayward fancy” is due to boredom; that it is the “unsuppressible imagination cut loose from concern with what is done” (Dewey, 1916, p. 216). While that may be true, much daydreaming or “fancy” is also a type of withdrawal—an almost complete retreat from the pain of being unaligned with the world. I think that a similar type of imaginative withdrawal is the tendency of some women to return again and again to destructive yet culturally “normal” story lines, to hide within what is deeply ingrained, readily available, and socially acceptable. “Hope deferred” does indeed “make the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). I suspect that there are times when a finely developed imagination only enables us to engage in a type of denial, to embellish and to decorate old life scripts so that we can maintain the illusion that they reflect all that is “normal” for every journey. Life is less frightening when it comes in packages, so we stick to the script. I am fairly sure that you would agree with me, for you noted that the imagination emerges “from shadowy regions.” A bit of unknowing comes with the territory.



In the same moment that I accept mystery, I continue to look to your life for clues regarding how we come to know. You imply that your title character Hope is strong and imaginative because she “grew in an atmosphere of love.” You also declare that in terms of the imagination “love can paint as well as fear.” At one point I took this to mean that love was a removal of fear, an unearthing and a disposal of all that instigates cruel distortions in the mind’s eye. However, the love<sup>11</sup> which feeds your protagonists’ imaginations is also based upon seemingly conscious choices which result in positive action. Although the heart—along with its desires and feelings—is always a part of the imagination, the love that you depict is not the result of uncontrollable feelings, romance, or even desire. Rather, it reflects a decided respect for both the self and others. Mixed with hope and faith, it consistently works towards “third eye” possibilities.

That we can “learn” or come to know how to love in a way that will direct our imaginations towards new or “third” perceptions is hopeful. Indeed, not only do you depict a positive, active, respectful love through your imaginative protagonists in Hope Leslie (1827), but you also practice it when you imagine “third eye” possibilities for your readers. Your last chapter portrays both an egalitarian marriage and a happy, productive single woman.

Slowly, I have come to realize that the love which enables us to imagine positive new paths for our lives is a vital part of teaching. Although we may never see the results, we hope that our stories, our experiences, will perhaps nourish students’ imaginations in some small way. Again and again women have worked through

problems and reconstructed stories which are somehow lost to successive generations. Holding out “third eye” possibilities to others, then, is a way of providing students with what Gerda Lerner (1993) calls “shoulders to stand on,” for drawing clues from other women’s lives prevents us from having to “reinvent the wheel” (p. 10). Spiraling back to the nineteenth century I hear your voice, and it nourishes my imagination.

I think again of how we both fell into that same strand of a woman’s tradition; we both re-interpreted Eve for the “first” time. My grappling with the misuse of this ancient story was vital to my journey, but I think that *your* retelling held the potential for more important cultural repercussions. By reshaping Eve’s story, you crossed over unknowable centuries to re-imagine life possibilities for American women. Your day was pivotal for determining the ways in which American gender roles would be defined. Re-conceptualizing the meaning of Eve’s Genesis role allowed you to re-envision America’s genesis. Therefore, your competitive conversations with Cooper, your vying for whose definition of Adam and Eve would win, offers important insights into your cultural—and therefore—personal journey.

#### End Notes

1. Daguerreotypes were early photographs which were produced on either a silver or a silver-covered copper plate (Webster, 1979, p. 283).
2. There are two creation accounts in Genesis. In the first description God makes both “man and woman” in His image. Genesis 1: 27 states “So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them” (New International Amplified Version). What this first account communicates—a message that Sedgwick would not have missed—is that women were created equal to men, not as their subordinates.

3. I consider Sedgwick's theories to be more *practical* than those of many recognized theorists because they are embedded within the context of an engaging novel full of sympathetic protagonists. Therefore, her ideas are designed to appeal to each reader's affect. In addition, her theories are presented as concrete "realities," rather than as cold and distant abstractions.
4. Deweyan scholar Jim Garrison (1997) uses the term "practical reasoning" to describe what Sedgwick implies is the imagination's work. Garrison (1997) defines "practical reasoning" as "inquiry into how to best transform an actual situation into a more desirable one" (p. 23). While Garrison (1997) asserts that feelings and the imagination are important facets of "tough minded thinking," he does not see the imagination as the creative power which nourishes and directs all cognitive functions when they are working at their fullest. There is separation rather than integration at this point. Conversely, Garrison (1997) notes that "for Dewey there is no supernatural, only the natural that is not yet known or created" (p. 21). Sedgwick viewed our creative ability—our potential to re-imagine and to re-create—as being instilled by her Creator.
5. When our creative powers are blocked or cut off, various forms of thought and activity suffer limitations, are deadened, and become "mechanical" (Dewey, 1916, p. 236; Huebner, 1996, p. 436).
6. Mary Kelley (1993) notes that Samuel Butler's Hudibras is a satirical poem which "derides English Puritans for intolerance, prejudice, and hypocrisy" (p. 74).
7. When I speak of the "affect," I am referring to those qualities which are associated with "the ear of the heart." The heart or the emotions, the spirit, and a concern for others are consistently integrated with the imagination whenever Sedgwick works to transcend false dichotomies, or to bring about positive transformations.
8. Mary Pipher (1994) observes that girls tend to respond to cultural pressures to "abandon their selves" in four ways. She notes, "they can conform, withdraw, be depressed or get angry. Whether girls feel depression or anger is a matter of attribution—those who blame themselves feel depressed, while those who blame others feel angry" (p. 43).
9. In The Healing Power of Stories: Creating Yourself Through the Stories of Your Life, English professor Daniel Taylor describes how reading both the living and the literary texts around him influenced who he came to be. In addition, the work of Carol Gilligan (1990) suggests that when older women alter their lives in positive ways, the young women with whom they are in contact often feel more freedom to read and alter their own lives differently (p. 219).
10. Sedgwick's dear friend, the British actress Fanny Kemble—who exasperated Nathaniel Hawthorne because she was such "a spirited woman"—entered into an ill-

advised marriage with the manipulative slaveholder, Pierce Butler. To her English friend Mary Russell Mitford Sedgwick wrote,

I admire and love Fanny Kimble who is soon to be married. Butler is a gentlemanly man, with good sense and an amiable disposition, infinitely her inferior. Poor girl, she makes a dangerous experiment; I have a thousand fears for the result (Furnas, 1982, p. 144).

Fanny's disastrous relationship with Butler must have been partially responsible for Sedgwick's unconventional ending of Hope Leslie (1827), in which her last words remind her readers that women do not need marriage to lead happy and useful lives.

11. Sedgwick's depiction of the role of love is similar to the biblical *agape*, which is used differently in the New Testament than it is in any other place in Greek literature (Vine, p. 703). Her reliance on symbolic details from the New Testament also implies that the concept of *agape* guided her characterization of the "love which could paint as well as fear." Reflecting the behavior of her imaginative protagonists, *agape* is a deliberate choice rather than a feeling, it is known "only by the actions it prompts," and it does not limit itself to those for whom it feels an affinity (Vine, p. 703). While it may incorporate desire to varying degrees, it is much broader than *eros* because by definition it produces actions. *Eros* does not.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS: FRAMEWORKS FOR A NEW ADAM AND A NEW EVE**

For the temper of the brain in quick apprehensions and acute judgments, to say no more, the most High and Sovereign God hath not made the Indian inferior to the European (Roger Williams).

James Fenimore Cooper is credited with creating the first American Adam—a rugged individualist who escapes the confines of civilization in order to live in harmony with nature. Throughout much of traditional American literary history the Adamic hero is depicted as the quintessential American. While this limited cultural vision is satisfying to some, it leaves others straining to hear the voice of an American Eve. For in spite of the fact that women played an important and active role in America’s cultural and literary development, most American literature and history classes are devoid of nineteenth-century women novelists, and strong, well-developed New Eve characters are unknown.

Interestingly, direct Old Testament references and allusions to the biblical Adam are rare in early literature which features the individualistic prototype with whom “Adam” is associated. R. W. B. Lewis (1955) explains that “while the Adamic image was invoked often and explicitly in the later stages of our history, during earlier stages it remained somewhat submerged, making itself felt as an atmospheric presence...a motivating factor” (p. 6). Indeed, during colonial times the Adamic myth was evident in literature both at home and abroad, for the American landscape was viewed as pure and was referred to as an Eden-like wilderness; it was to those natural spaces that the lone,

individualistic American –the man without a history–longed to start anew. Citing Hawthorne’s The Marble Faun, Melville’s Billy Budd, and Henry James’s The Golden Bowl as examples of *nineteenth-century* novels that *do* contain explicit references to Adam or the “Fall of Man,” Lewis (1955) notes, “those novels were perhaps as close as American culture ever came to *the full conscious realization of the myth* it had so long secreted” (p. 6). In other words, it is Lewis’s (1955) claim that it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that American writers first connected the individualistic male hero to the Adam of Genesis—a relationship that spoke of how deeply the Adamic myth was embedded within the American psyche. However, like the vast majority of twentieth-century literary scholars, Lewis was unaware of the contributions of nineteenth-century women novelists.<sup>1</sup>

A significant part of Catharine Sedgwick’s journey as it is depicted in Hope Leslie (1827) involves reworking conventional interpretations of the story of Adam and Eve. Specifically, Sedgwick uses biblical allusions and symbolic details to depict the supposedly “weak” and “corruptible” Eve—and by association the character and potential of American women—in a new and more positive light. What is important about Sedgwick’s characterization of her New Eve characters in terms of Lewis’s comments is that she was clearly aware of the importance of the Adamic myth and its impact on how Americans envisioned their identities and the roles of women in the new republic. In contrast, it is not clear if her contemporary James Fenimore Cooper possessed the same depth of insight, for while he constructed characters who represented what he viewed as the quintessential female and male Americans, he did not

*directly* associate them with Adam and Eve. Therefore, it was *Sedgwick*, not Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, or James, who first recognized and named the connection between the Old Testament Adam and the individualistic Jacksonian male literary hero. Although her own version of an American Adam embraced a balance of community and individualism, he—along with her New Eve—was written in response to individualistic male literary protagonists and their female sidekicks. In addition, while Cooper featured male protagonists who worked out their life journeys—and Cooper’s cultural vision—through acts of separation, the female protagonists of Sedgwick’s novels communicated personal journeys and national visions embedded in community, or attachment.

Indeed, the once well-known Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827), which was published one year after Cooper’s The Last of the Mohican’s (1826), was not only apparently written in response to Cooper’s novel, but was also part of a larger, on-going “conversation” between nineteenth-century men and women novelists who offered different cultural models for their growing republic. As Patricia Kalayjian (1997) notes, “One result of [Sedgwick’s] marginalization is that her literary conversation with Cooper—so apparent and vital to their contemporary reading public—has been most effectively, but unfortunately, silenced (p. 14). One reason why the silencing of Sedgwick’s voice is so unfortunate is that it not only obliterates her alternative cultural vision, but it also obscures an important site for investigating the ways in which a specific American woman constructed her life journey.

Not surprisingly, the most basic differences between Cooper's and Sedgwick's depictions of New American Adam and Eve characters reflect nineteenth-century women's and men's differing realms of influence, for while men ventured into the public arena of outside work and politics, women negotiated their life journeys within the home sphere. In contrast to Cooper's most obvious New Adam character, Natty Bumppo, who is "unencumbered by the mundane details of home and society," Sedgwick's Native American and European American New Eves are strengthened through their involvement in domestic relationships and responsibilities (Castiglia, 1989, p. 3). And while Cooper portrays women as "passive rather than self-reliant," Sedgwick's New Eve characters actively influence their communities according to the guidance of their own consciences. As Castiglia (1989) explains, Sedgwick's version of a captivity-romance novel features "strong women who draw fortitude from interracial cooperation and empowering sisterhood," for not only did Sedgwick draw strength from her own friendships with women, but she also believed that women (at least from her station) were obligated to influence culture according to the dictates of their consciences (p. 4).

Sedgwick's strong stance regarding the right of women to follow their consciences reflects a basic tenet of her Unitarian faith, which unlike orthodox Calvinism, stresses that the interpretation and application of scripture may be worked out according to each person's conscience. In fact, Sedgwick's newly constructed beliefs in Unitarianism informed her entire cultural vision. Much like the well-known Unitarian clergyman William Ellery Channing and the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo



Emerson, Sedgwick believed that the basic nature of human beings was good and that as American society matured, social injustices would correct themselves (Foster, 1974, p. 135). Indeed, as Unitarians, both Sedgwick and Channing trusted that just as scripture progressed from Old Testament law towards New Testament love, so, too, would the new republic gradually develop towards a more mature national character. Sedgwick was also part of what Castiglia (1989) terms “an alternative tradition” in that she was “sympathetic to women and Indians—and to their intermarriage” (p. 4). Cooper, on the other hand, believed there was ultimately little hope for the survival of what he viewed as an acceptable American culture, and he maintained there was no place in American society for miscegenation. That women novelists depicted possibilities of peaceful co-existence between Indians and white Americans disturbed Cooper, for he reasoned that since women were “protected” from “reality” by men, they were not qualified to write truthfully even about their own experiences as women (Baym, 1992, p. 25).

In this chapter, I will not only discuss how Cooper’s and Sedgwick’s constructions of New Adam and New Eve characters illustrate their different approaches to “miscegenation” and Indian displacement, but I will also explore how they used their prototypical American characters to depict who was rightly qualified to engage in cultural interpretations and leadership. (Although there is little evidence that Cooper possessed Sedgwick’s insight regarding the Adamic myth, and it was much later before the New Adam label or tradition was attached to individualistic literary heroes, for the remainder of this chapter I will refer to Cooper’s male protagonists as “New

Adams” since that is the role they fulfill in his novel.) In addition, I will examine how their differing visions of race and gender impacted their views on such diverse issues as the role of love and the construction of history within the American republic. Both used different strategies to promote their versions of American Adams and American Eves. While Cooper only depicts one of his female characters—the helpless Alice Munro—as a New World Eve, Sedgwick constructs a more inclusive American vision by depicting two indigenous women—Nelema and Magawisca— as well as her subversive title character Hope Leslie as New Eves. Appealing to her nineteenth-century audience’s deeply entrenched respect for and awareness of Christian doctrines, Sedgwick supports her vision of women and indigenous peoples in Hope Leslie through scriptural arguments surrounded by numerous biblical allusions.

Through his construction of what R. W. B. Lewis (1955) terms a “spatial vision” (p. 100), Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans works to assuage white American guilt over Indian displacement by suggesting that violence against Indians is acceptable since—to his mind— they are less virtuous than people of Anglo-Saxon descent, and that displacement is necessary to ensure the American Adam pure natural spaces to which he can escape from civilization’s corruption. However, before discussing the two authors’ differing cultural interpretations, I will provide explanations concerning Sedgwick’s and Cooper’s apparent rivalry, and will continue to weave this thread throughout the chapter. Apart from its entertainment value, awareness of their probable competition is important because it underscores the notion that Sedgwick’s and Cooper’s diverse cultural visions emerged from *at least* two sides of a cultural conversation which most

present-day literature students mistakenly believe to have been a series of male monologues. Having inherited a false and exclusive literary dichotomy in which the voices of nineteenth-century women novelists have been silenced, Sedgwick's response to Cooper's 1826 novel, once well-known, no longer provides students with a missing strand of American literary and cultural history. In addition, an examination of Sedgwick's response to Cooper's vision, along with her insightful construction of New Eve and New Adam characters, provides important background for those who wish to gain a fuller picture of the obstacles and possibilities against which she wrote her life.

### Literary Rivalries

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Sedgwick's work was extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic, and Kalayjian (1997) reports that it was not uncommon for critics to draw comparisons between Sedgwick's and Cooper's novels (p. 9). Indeed, when Sedgwick's Redwood was published anonymously in 1824, Cooper was mistaken as its author. While this mistake was quickly rectified in the United States, the original versions published in Italy and France were printed with Cooper listed as the author. That Sedgwick found this error to be amusing is evident through her comments in a letter to a sister-in-law, in which she writes that she "hoped Mr. C's self-complacency will not be wounded by the mortifying news" (Kalayjian, 1997, p. 9).

Apparently, this was not the last time Sedgwick was to be amused at Cooper's expense. In The Last of the Mohicans, two of Cooper's characters, Natty Bumppo (the Adam-like scout) and David Gamut (a bumbling music teacher) discuss the melancholy

whistle of the “wish-ton-wish,” which Natty Bumpo later explains is an Eastern Indian word for the whip-poor-will. However, it is actually Pawnee for “prairie dog” (Kalayjian, 1997, p. 5). Not surprisingly, Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie, which was published just one year later, features a Native American heroine whose name, Magawisca, is suspiciously similar to the Pequod term for whip-poor-will (p. 1). According to Madison (1997), Sedgwick carries her joke one step further when the character, Everell, alludes to a legend which says that the whip-poor-will’s songs are a bad omen since they encapsulate the souls of the first North American Indians to be massacred by the British. To Magawisca he comments, “Your voice is sweet for a bird of ill-omen” (p. 7). Later in the novel, Sedgwick refers to the whip-poor-will again when a Housatonick Indian warns that the “wekolis” is perched on sacrifice rock and that “his cry is neither musical, nor merry—a bad sign in a bird” (p. 7). Madison (1997) explains that Sedgwick’s end note on the Delaware word, “wekolis,” is simply “whip-poor-will,” and that her decision to use her knowledge of the Delaware word even though it would be spoken by a Housatonick Indian, represents her subtle, yet determined attempt to poke fun at Cooper’s linguistic confusion (p. 7).

However, Cooper appears to have been either unbelievably unaware of his error, or bent on “tweaking” Sedgwick, for he entitled his 1829 novel, The Wept of the Wish-Ton -Wish (in which the wish-ton-wish is a whip-poor-will, not a prairie dog) (Madison, 1997, p. 13). Unfortunately for Cooper, many critics noted that this novel was quite similar to Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (Madison, 1997, p. 13). However, as an 1833 letter from educator Emma Willard indicates, Cooper claimed that he had never read Hope

Leslie. In light of the fact that Cooper had written a lengthy review of Sedgwick's A New England Tale (1822), his claim that he had not read her most popular novel, Hope Leslie, is suspect. Rather than admit to having noticed Sedgwick's recent work (and her digs at his professional mistakes) Cooper's face-saving strategy was to claim that he "read little" because (like his Adamic characters) he preferred to "study nature" (Madison, 1997, p. 13). In short, Cooper refused to acknowledge his participation in a larger, on-going cultural conversation between literary women and men.

Although critic Christopher Castiglia (1989) is correct when he states that it is short-sighted to imply that the subversive cultural vision presented in Hope Leslie is *merely* a response to The Last of the Mohicans, what he seems to miss is the idea that Cooper's novel provided Sedgwick with an amusing outlet for her already well-developed, Unitarian-based vision for the new republic and for her own life. The fact that Cooper's cultural interpretations were at such odds with Sedgwick's meant that by refuting his themes, Sedgwick provided herself with an entertaining framework from which to portray the American Eve. Evidence that Sedgwick was responding to Cooper is plentiful. For example, both novelists contrast two sisters. Reflecting his preference for passive, submissive, "females," Cooper's fair-complexioned and dependent heroine, Alice, survives the story and marries the hero, while her emotionally strong, dark-complexioned sister, Cora, chooses death over a forced marriage to an Indian. However, in Sedgwick's novel the tables are turned. Although both sisters live, it is the pale, bashful Faith who marries (and quite happily) an Indian, Oneco, while the strong, "rich complexioned" Hope marries the Puritan community's most eligible bachelor,

Everell (Kalayjian, 1984, p. 13; Foster, 1974, p. 91). Interestingly, Sedgwick's heroine, Hope Leslie, was originally named "Alice" before being re-christened upon entering the Puritan community. That Sedgwick's lively, independent Alice is a direct response to Cooper's passive, dependent, Alice, is clear, for both authors imply that their heroines represent the New Eve, or appropriate American womanhood.

Cooper's perspective on what he deemed appropriate and necessary regarding the behavior of American women is better understood within the context of what Lewis and others have termed his "spatial vision." As Lewis explains, Cooper's Adamic heroes are always situated away from what nineteenth-century society associated with time, or progress. To Cooper's mind, time and social progress could not be separated, for he related both to the growth of "civilization." Although Cooper's Adam-like heroes, such as the scout Natty Bumppo are willing to assist members of white civilization when they are threatened in the wilderness, the hallmarks of time, or civilization, are something the New Adam must avoid in order to maintain his purity. As Lewis (1955) explains, civilization is built upon "social institutions, with their precedents and established practices; [and] relationships inherited through the years, thick with histories, complexities, involvements and corruptions" (p. 99). In contrast to civilization's time is the American Adam's Eden-like wilderness, or space. By escaping from time's corruptions, the New Adam is free to inhabit space,—“the unbounded area of total possibility” (Noble, 1964, p. 419). Unfortunately, this male-oriented vision implicates women; for because women are associated with luring men into the trap of

domesticity, they are also deemed responsible for binding them to corrupt civilization (Baym, 1992, p. 25; Blair, 1999, p. 18).

Throughout his novel, Cooper uses the nineteenth-century's cultural assumption that white middle-class women need male protectors to build his rationale for the exclusion of women's voices from America's literary and historical records. Nina Baym (1992) explains that according to Cooper, male authors "could produce realism because they faced reality directly; women could produce only schoolgirl romance because they were protected—by men—from the ceaseless struggle through which civilization is instituted" (p. 25). Because of this "protection," inexperienced women are supposedly blinded by unrealistic, even dangerous, ideas. Indeed, it is widely believed that The Last of the Mohicans was Cooper's covert refutation of Lydia Maria Child's Hobomok, which presents women as having influence over men and American culture (Baym, 1992, p. 25). That Cooper views women as unqualified to act as cultural interpreters is evident through his treatment of the characters Cora and Alice Munro.

At one point in the plot, the child-like Alice is eager to sing hymns in the wilderness with a traveling song-master, David Gamut. While this behavior is "charming," it is also, as Baym (1992) explains, "an expression of female inexperience [because] its illusion of safety creates vulnerability, just as their noisy harmony alerts hostile Indians to the whereabouts of the white party" (p. 32). Alice's "inexperience," or helplessness, is also indirectly responsible for her sister's death. During the Iroquois / Huron attack on the British civilians leaving Fort William Henry, Cora would have made a safe escape to the woods if she had not been obliged to stop and help Alice, who

swooned. As a result of this delay, the Mohawk / Huron villain, Magua, is able to capture Cora, which results in her eventual death.

It is easy to see Cooper's implication that if women like Alice are allowed to act on the basis of their own perceptions, the lives of many would be endangered. However, it does not follow that Cooper appreciates strong women. In Cooper's vision Alice is far from "useless," for although she constantly endangers her companions, she provides white men with what they need: "a woman to fight *for* and *about*" (Baym, 1992, p. 26). Unlike her self-controlled and intelligent sister, Cora, there is little fear that Alice Munro will ever seek to directly influence her culture. Therefore, Cooper not only allows Alice to survive, but as the hero Heyward's chosen mate, she also becomes the symbolic American Eve. For although the unattached, undomesticated scout, Natty Bumppo, represents Cooper's quintessential American Adam, the character Duncan Heyward is also situated as an Adam-like character. As Baym (1992) explains, Duncan is "the patriarch's lieutenant and heir—that is, the present and the future protector of American women and, accordingly, the protector and progenitor of American civilization. His chosen consort, in turn, will be the mother of America" (p. 26).

Unfortunately, if the oft "insensible," (and therefore voiceless) Alice complements Cooper's spatial vision (which qualifies her to be the American Eve), then his perspective also necessitates that Cora,—who is strong enough to mediate between Duncan and the enemy, Magua—be killed before the novel's end. According to Leland Person (1985), Cora, as a "real" woman—or one who possesses a voice and agency—is



unsuited for Cooper's Adamic vision (p. 684). Referring to Annette Kolodny's The Lay of the Land, he quotes,

Male novelists typically pre-empt any rightful place for women in their exclusive "nature-culture" by personifying the landscape itself as feminine. Making women symbols of the false culture they are escaping, men doubly purge 'real' women from their new Edens, denying them significant relationships with the frontier hero—and with nature (p. 684).

Therefore, Sedgwick refutes Cooper's spatial vision, with its accompanying trivialization of women, by depicting three "real" American Eve's as the elderly Native American "mother" Nelema, the Pequod chief's youthful daughter Magawisca, and the lively Puritan teenager (previously called Alice) Hope Leslie. Unlike the Munro sisters who must be guided through the wilderness, the title character Hope Leslie's "high health" and "love for exploring hill and dale, ravine and precipice" have given her an "elastic step and ductile grace" (Person, 1985, p. 122). In spite of the fact that Magawisca roams throughout the wilderness whenever it suits her, Sedgwick's focus is not on lengthy natural descriptions, but on what Cooper disdains,—the domestic relationships enjoyed by her strong female protagonists. In fact, even when Hope's future adoptive family, the Fletchers, eventually experience an Indian attack with a subsequent kidnaping, Sedgwick's description of their wilderness trek is brief. She does, however, take the time to make a direct dig at the almost constant and circuitous journeying in The Last of the Mohicans. As Baym (1992) notes,

Sedgwick archly promises to refrain from describing "step by step, the progress of the Indian fugitives [since their] sagacity in traversing their native forests [has been] so well described in a recent popular work, that their usages have become as familiar as household words, and nothing remains but to shelter defects of skill and knowledge under the veil of silence" (p. 33).

To Sedgwick, wilderness wanderings have little to do with American culture; it is domestic and community relationships that count. In contrast to Cooper's traditional captivity story in which an Adamic hero breaks free from a "stifling community" to discover "romanticized solitude," Sedgwick's female adventurers escape from "stifling isolation into an empowering community" (Castiglia, 1989, p. 5). Rather than promoting a dream of "boundless space," Sedgwick depicts the possibility of a domestic Eden, or garden in the wilderness, through the adoptive home of Faith Leslie which is managed by Martha Fletcher. With her husband absent to Boston for "three seasons," Mrs. Fletcher's home is a "peaceful, equitable domestic world devoid of harsh and hierarchizing law, a harmonious world composed of women, children, servants, and Indians" (Castiglia, 1989, p. 4). While Cooper believed the possibility of peaceful co-existence between white "civilization" and Native Americans to be an unrealistic, feminine fantasy, Sedgwick hints broadly at its possibility. In fact, when the Fletcher home is attacked by the Pequods, she makes it clear that they are seeking retribution for the Puritan community's earlier massacre of Pequod women and children. Also important, Martha Fletcher's household is unable to escape the attack only because Mrs. Fletcher chooses to trust in male protection rather than to listen to the warning of the Pequod mother-figure, Nelema. Experiencing a feeling of foreboding upon observing the visual sign of a snake's skin, rattle, and arrow that Nelema drops in front of the Fletcher household, Martha asks Magawisca to interpret the message. The young girl intimates that it is a sign of war and danger. However, Martha refuses to move her domestic circle since her husband (and male protector) will soon be arriving from

Boston. Reflecting her opposition to Cooper's view regarding male protection and women's supposed inability to interpret reality, Sedgwick illustrates the disastrous results of Martha's decision to ignore Nelema's experienced female voice (and her own intuitive voice) when both Martha and her baby are killed.

Sedgwick's most powerful refutation of Cooper's perspective of women and the American landscape is her inclusion of Hope's literary double, Magawisca, as an American Eve. As Baym (1992) asserts, Cooper's novel demonstrates that "the future citizens of the republic are to be whites only" (p. 26). Therefore, the fact that Magawisca is not only female, but also Native American, makes Sedgwick's depiction of her ability to interact with the land especially irksome to Cooper's perspective. Sedgwick's strategy both for portraying Magawisca as a New Eve and for making a favorable impression on her nineteenth-century audience was to construct biblical frameworks for the Pequod's pantheistic beliefs. After implying Magawisca's Adam-like ability to name and interpret through her translation of Nelema's visual symbols, Sedgwick draws a striking contrast between the Puritans' (and Cooper's) Old Testament "subduing" of the land and the New Eve, Magawisca's, peaceful co-existence with the landscape. As Sedgwick's narrator describes,

The branches of the trees that grew from the rocky and precipitous declivities on each side, met and interlaced, forming a sylvan canopy over [an] imprisoned stream. To Magawisca, whose imagination breathed a living spirit into all the objects of nature, it seemed as if the spirits of the wood had stooped to listen to its sweet music (1987, p. 82).

Through Magawisca's imagination (what Cooper might have called "romantic fancies"), Sedgwick not only provides her readers with a new, alternative perspective of the

American landscape, but she also honors Pequod notions of spirituality, thereby reminding her nineteenth-century readers of indigenous peoples' humanity.

At first glance it might appear that The Last of the Mohicans also promotes respect for at least some Indian groups since two important characters, the last Mohican, Chingachgook, and his son, Uncas, possess noble characteristics. However, emphasizing Native American humanity does not align itself with Cooper's spatial vision, which, to his mind, necessitates the continual removal of Indian groups in order to ensure increased spaces for Adamic characters escaping civilization. Therefore, Cooper constructs characters and dialogue that justify his Jacksonian perspective. Through a conversation between Alice Munro and Duncan Heyward, Cooper introduces the idea that the possession of outstanding virtue is a rarity among Indians. Referring to Uncas, Alice exclaims, "Surely, Duncan, those cruel murders, those terrific scenes of torture, of which we read and hear so much, are never acted in the presence of such as he!" To the inexperienced Alice, Duncan explains,

I agree with you, Alice, in thinking that such a front and eye were formed rather to intimidate than to deceive; but let us not practice a deception on ourselves, by expecting any other exhibition of what we esteem virtue, than according to the fashion of a savage. As bright examples of great qualities are but too uncommon among Christians, so are they singular and solitary with the Indians (Cooper, 1983, p. 53).

Indeed, Natty Bumppo hints at the same racist message when at one point, he explains some of the supposed differences between the "lawful work" of "redskins" and that of white men. He observes,

It would be a great offense for a white man to scalp the dead, whereas it's a signal virtue in an Indian. Then again, a white man cannot amboosh women and children in war, while a redskin may (Clark, 1984, p. 35).

Through such comments as these, Cooper works to assuage American guilt over Indian displacement, for if even "lawful" Indians fall beneath Protestant, Anglo-Saxon moral standards, and those with noble characteristics are rare (and dying out), then perhaps it is not so criminal to force such people off their land.

Another way Cooper justifies Indian displacement is through his strategy of categorizing the Delaware / Mohican nations as good, and the (fictitious) Iroquois / Huron alliance as bad. Natty Bumppo, the Adamic character who is at home in wilderness spaces, emphatically states that "if Webb [a British colonel] wants faith and honesty in an Indian, let him bring out the tribes of the Delawares...and I call him a liar, that says cowardly blood runs in the veins of a Delaware" (Cooper, 1983, p. 50). On the other hand, when speaking of the various Iroquois nations, he calls them "sarpants," as well as "greedy and lying" (p. 50). And when he learns that Heyward's guide, Magua, was adopted by the Mohawks, and is really a Huron, he immediately distrusts him, as do the Mohicans, Chingachgook and Uncas.

When readers consider the different levels of success the federal government experienced in the forced removal of the two Indian nations in Cooper's novel, it is easy to understand why Cooper chose to favor the Delaware and to villainize the Iroquois. Within his novel, Cooper hints that the Delaware are not problematic to national expansion. In spite of the fact that Cooper's novel is set in 1757, Natty Bumppo refers to the removal of a contingent of Delawares to Canada which historically does

not occur until 1790, as though it has already taken place. By Cooper's day, the 1820's, the Delaware presented little evidence of resistance to the United States government. According to Delaware Tribal Headquarters (1999), "By 1820 they crossed the Mississippi River into Missouri and, during the next 40 years produced 13 treaties." However, while the Iroquois homeland was surrendered to New York land speculators after the Revolutionary War, the Iroquois successfully avoided removal during the United States' massive efforts in the 1830's. Therefore, during the time Cooper was writing The Last of the Mohicans (1826), Iroquois resistance was problematic to both national expansion and to his Adamic vision.

That his intent to discredit the Iroquois was purposeful is evident through his inversion of the historical record. For although his account of the Battle of Fort William Henry is accurate, his Indian history is not. During the scenes in which Duncan Heyward and Colonel Munro negotiate with their French opponent Montcalm, Cooper gives the definite impression that along with the Hurons, the Iroquois sided with the French. As Robert Clark (1984) explains, "This representation runs counter to the historical facts as reported by historians from Cadwallader Colden in the eighteenth century, through Heckewelder and Dewitt Clinton, down to modern authorities: all agree that the Iroquois were either pro-British or neutral throughout the eighteenth century" (p. 82). That the Hurons would ever have formed an alliance with the Iroquois is ludicrous, since their decision to side with the French was a direct result of being forced out of their homes by the Iroquois. After the French / Huron alliance developed, the Iroquois were compelled to align themselves with the British.

Clark (1984) notes that Cooper first attempts to cover his historical maneuvers in his novel's Preface, in which he assures readers that "The greatest difficulty with which the student of Indian history has to contend, is the utter confusion that pervades the names" (p. 83). He then proceeds to ensure that confusion through Natty Bumppo's arbitrary usage of the Six Nations of the Iroquois' names (the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscarora)(Clark, 1984, p. 80). Through the character Magua, he adds additional tribal names to the plot, thereby increasing the confusion. Clark (1984) explains,

The main textual agency of this displacement is the treacherous double agent, Magua. Having begun life as a Mohawk, become a Huron, and then returned to the Mohawk as a spy, he is able to confuse the reader by obliterating distinctions between the names of tribes. Since the name "Magua" is visually and phonetically proximate to the Dutch name for Mohawk, "Maqua", and since Hawk-eye frequently curses the iniquity of both the individual "Magua" (the Huron) and the "Maquas" (the Mohawks), his name allows the Iroquois and the Hurons to be established as allied and equally abominable tribes (p. 84).

Cooper's many historical maneuvers did not stop him from originally presenting The Last of the Mohicans as a serious history, rather than a romance. Baym (1992) reports that in his 1826 Preface, Cooper ridicules the "inexperienced" cultural vision of women authors when he warns female readers that his novel relates "to matters which may not be universally understood, especially by the more imaginative sex, some of whom, under the impression that it is a fiction, may be induced to read the book" (p. 32). Baym (1992) emphasizes that Cooper continues along this line when, during his Preface's conclusion, he remarks that the ideas of "all young ladies" are "limited by the four walls of a comfortable drawing room" (p. 32).

Not surprisingly, one year later, Sedgwick challenges Cooper's claim that his novel is history by the comments she makes within the Preface of her own historical novel. As Baym (1992) explains, Sedgwick "cheerfully grants that this novel—like all novels—is not history but fiction and implicitly mocks Cooper's insistence that his own story is anything different" (p. 32). Her approach to presenting the history of European and Indian relations is radically different from Cooper's. Rather than depict a battle in which multitudes of white civilians are massacred by hostile Indians, Sedgwick reveals that there is another untold side of such stories—that of the Native Americans. In contrast to Cooper, who obscures his manipulation of historical "facts" behind the inter-workings of unfamiliar tribal names and relations, Sedgwick constructs a simple, yet dramatic story of an European / Indian battle told from the perspective of one Pequod woman, Magawisca. In so doing, Sedgwick also challenges Cooper's condescension towards the "more imaginative sex," for it is Sedgwick's imagination which allows her to paint a fuller picture of the Pequod War by allowing it to be told from a new perspective.

Through Magawisca's account of the Puritans' massacre of unsuspecting Pequod women and children, Sedgwick questions seventeenth-century accounts of the conflict (which justify Puritan actions and villainize the Pequods) found in John Winthrop's The History of New England and William Hubbards's A Narrative of the Troubles With the Indians in New England" (Gould, 1994, p. 642). Everell's response to Magawisca's version of the battle illustrates this dramatically. The narrator comments,



This new version of an old story reminded him of the man and the lion in the fable. But here it was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist's subjects; but it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 53).

Also alluding to Moses' Old Testament tablets of law through her reference to the sculptor's chisel, Sedgwick reveals how the "old story" is transformed when placed in new hands.

Reflecting her Unitarian belief that the republic would mature from Old Testament fear towards New Testament love, Sedgwick also uses a scene involving Everell Fletcher and his trusted servant, Digby, to illustrate how the republic's (and Cooper's) historical obsession with Indian hostility is immaturity which stems from fear. That fear can distort historical understanding is illustrated through a scene in which Everell and Digby are guarding the Fletcher home from possible Indian attack. In the course of their night watch, Digby begins to recount his experiences during the Pequod War. Sedgwick writes, "they both wore away the time till the imaginations of both relater and listener were at that pitch, when...every passing sound bears a voice to the quickened sense" (Gould, 1994, p. 453). In fact, Digby becomes so excited that he mistakes the return of Magawisca from the forest for the invasion of a massive, male enemy. Upon becoming convinced of his mistake he remarks, "Could I have been so deceived?" (Gould, 1994, p. 647). In spite of what Cooper would have lauded as Digby's experience as a male protector, his interpretations are dangerously incorrect, and much like the childish Alice Munro, he unintentionally endangers the lives of others.

Digby's war adventures represent what Philip Gould (1994) labels "male historiography" (p. 546). And through the elderly man's actions, Sedgwick is able to question the accuracy of the patriarchy's "status quo historiography." For if an "experienced" man's eyewitness account can stem from fearful, "romantic imaginations," then, so, too, can the historical interpretations of a fearful male novelist. As Gould (1994) points out, Sedgwick also reveals that Digby's deficiencies as "a representative male historian result in large part from his deformed moral sense" (p. 647). Loyal to patriarchal law, he sees nothing wrong with his involvement in what some have termed "the massacre at Mystic" in which Puritans slaughtered hundreds of unsuspecting Pequot women and children while their tribal warriors were absent. Thus Sedgwick exposes the perverse fear that drives Indian displacement and Cooper's spatial vision.

Sedgwick also uses Digby's botched interpretation of reality, to reveal the importance of allowing women's voices within America's cultural conversation. Because of his fear and lack of respect for women's experiences, Digby dismisses the elderly Nelema's attempts to warn the family of coming danger. He says, "I liked not being driven hither and yon by that old hag's tokens; nor yet quite to take counsel from your good mother's fears, she being but a woman" (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 42). Much like Cooper, Digby cannot see that both female and Native American voices are necessary in order to interpret reality successfully.

Cooper does not admit to the possibility of peaceful interdependence between differing cultures because his Adamic vision is exclusively white. To his mind, white

people can not share land with Native Americans because to do so would be to risk miscegenation, which, as Fielder (1966) notes, is something Cooper considered to be morally wrong (p. 207). To the point of absurdity, Natty Bumpo's every reference to Indians is accompanied by his assertion that he is "a man without a cross," or simply that he *is* "a white man." While Cooper's emphasis on his American Adam's "whiteness" is telling, his portrayal and eventual destruction of Cora is even more so. When Colonel Munro confesses to Duncan Heyward that his first wife (and Cora's mother) was "a lady descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class...so basely enslaved," in spite of Duncan's admiration for Cora's courage, he is secretly repulsed by her African heritage. Clearly, Cooper is threatened by crossing racial boundaries, which is first evident when he describes Cora's appearance. Of her complexion, Cooper says that it "was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the color of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds" (Fielder, 1994, p. 206).

In spite of Cooper's belief that Indians must vanish in order to protect "the color line," which to his mind was "eternal and God-given" (Fielder, 1994, p. 207), some of his contemporaries urged him to allow Cora to marry his courageous Mohican character, Uncas. Although in light of Alice and Duncan's attachment the coupling of Cora and Uncas would fit well within a traditional romantic storyline, it does not align itself with Cooper's exclusively white Adamic vision. As Baym (1992) explains,

Cora, the beloved daughter of a father who married women of two different races, stands for the possibility of an American future in which races were combined into one new social body. Her already mixed blood, were it to be mixed again with an American Indian, would produce tri-racial children—the incarnate 'e pluribus unum' of the American national seal (p. 27).

Such a possibility would deflate Cooper's entire spatial / Adamic vision, with its abhorrence of miscegenation, its call for national expansion, and its leadership by white males. In order to avoid the co-existence and intermingling of differing races, Cooper destroys Cora, Uncas (who is also attracted to Cora), and Magua towards the novel's end.

Employing a strategy similar to Sedgwick's, Cooper authorizes his destruction of Cora by appealing to his nineteenth-century audience's biblical sympathies, for he suggests that Cora's death is ultimately the will of God. Kidnapped by Magua who threatens to kill her if she will not submit to be his wife, the usually strong Cora falls to her knees during a chase scene (Natty Bumpo, Heyward, and Uncas are coming to the rescue) and stretching her arms towards Heaven, pleads "I am thine! do with me as thou seest best!" Moments later, when Magua's attention is diverted by Uncas' surprise attack, his brutal assistant fatally stabs Cora in the back (p. 337). To Cooper's mind, the possibility of the racially mixed Cora enjoying a happy marriage does not reflect "reality." Indeed, in reference to his marriage to a woman from the Caribbean, Colonel Munro states that "a curse [is] entailed upon Scotland by her unnatural union with a foreign and trading people" (p. 208). Noting Cooper's perverse biblical interpretations, Fielder (1966) explains, "In the world of Grace, true happiness is possible; but in [Cooper's] world of Nature, all lies under a curse" (p. 208).

Reflecting her own life journey, in which she moved away from the dreariness of orthodox Calvinism, Sedgwick did not view the new republic as being under an oppressive curse, but as possessing the potential to mature towards New Testament

love and freedom. In particular, Sedgwick's vision encapsulates the Unitarian idea that women should be free to listen to their own consciences. Indeed, Mary Kelley (1987) notes that "the female conscience becomes the American model" for Sedgwick (xxxv). Through the American Eve, Hope Leslie, and her various doubles, Sedgwick's cultural vision seeks to usher nineteenth-century women out of patriarchy's misogynistic curse, and into their rightful places as leaders in liberty. This possibility is first evident when Hope's tutor, Mr. Craddock, is bitten by a rattlesnake, and Hope confidently offers to suck out the venom. The serpent holds no power over this New World / New Testament Eve (Castiglia, 1989, p. 12). As Hope later explains to her adoptive father, William Fletcher, "I well knew it could not harm me" (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 102). Symbolically, Hope's fearless statement emerges from the Old Testament promise given in Genesis 3:15 which foretells that Eve's future offspring will "bruise and tread [the serpent's] head underfoot." From a biblical perspective, the significance of this implication is enormous. The serpent is representative of the world's downfall, which includes specific "curses" under which humanity must labor. For women, these curses include living under male authority (Genesis 3:16). However, nineteenth-century readers would have been aware that Old Testament curses are broken and the law fulfilled at the cross of Christ (Galations 3:13). Sedgwick uses this scene to send the message that women are free from the law, or Old Testament curses and, therefore, possess the power to trample misogyny under their feet.

Sedgwick's use of snake symbolism becomes even more significant with the realization that in the New Testament, Jesus is described as the "New Adam" and that

“he came to set the captives free.” That the “New Eve,” Hope, acts as a female Christ figure is implied through her own habit of “releasing captives.” For when the “old, Indian mother” Nelema, is unjustly imprisoned by the Puritans for performing a snake ritual, it is Hope who rescues her. To those in the Puritan community who regard Hope’s fearlessness of the older woman’s snake dance as foolish, she counters, “It is better to mistake in blessing than in cursing” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 109).

Just as Cooper determines to discredit the character of Native Americans through his white characters’ racist dialogue and his own twisting of historical details, so, too, does Sedgwick seek to raise her readers’ awareness of their humanity by emphasizing the roles of Pequot women as New Eve characters. As mentioned earlier, Nelema uses a snake symbol in her attempt to rescue Martha Fletcher from imminent destruction. However, it is in her success as a healer through which Sedgwick most dramatically reveals Nelema’s role as a New Eve when she performs the snake dance that saves Mr. Craddock’s life. Based on her knowledge of the New Testament allusion to Jesus as the “New Adam,” Sedgwick implies that by acting as a healer, the New Eve, Nelema, possesses a characteristic akin to a New World Christ figure. Nelema’s ritual, which involves a “kind of wand...wreathed in a snake’s skin,” is reminiscent of the brass serpent on a pole lifted up by Moses so that faithful Israelites could look upon it for healing. Not only would most of Sedgwick’s readership have been aware of the biblical ties between snakes and healing, but they also would have viewed this Old Testament story as prophetic of Christ’s being lifted up for the healing of the world (I Peter 2:24).

There is a mixture of allusions present in this scene. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Sedgwick allows Nelema to refer to her own people's history regarding snakes and healing. Speaking of the snake that is also "delineated on her shoulder," Nelema explains, "it is a sign of honour, won for our race by him who first drew from the veins the poison of all creeping things. The tale was told by our fathers, and sung at our feasts..." (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 104). Certainly, Nelema's narration indicates a victory over the serpent just as the more familiar (to Sedgwick's nineteenth-century audience) biblical story does. In this way, Sedgwick blurs the lines between the religious beliefs of the two cultures, thereby emphasizing the importance of religious (and cultural) tolerance and justifying Nelema's healing practices. When Hope states to William Fletcher concerning Craddock's dramatic recovery, "May I not answer....in the language of scripture, this only I know, that whereas thy servant was sick, he is now whole," (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 107) she effectively cloaks the results of Nelema's snake ritual with the words of Jesus. Thus, Sedgwick suggests an appropriate New Testament response to a woman's non-traditional action which also makes her image of Nelema as a Christ-figure more credible.

As mentioned earlier, Magawisca is also presented as a New Eve because of her peaceful interactions with the landscape. However, like Nelema and Hope, Magawisca is portrayed as most powerful when Sedgwick extends her role as a New Eve to include a characteristic which alludes to the New Testament's "New Adam." Rather than acting as a "healer," Magawisca behaves as a female savior figure when she risks her own life to save Everell's. Similar to so many other nineteenth-century romantic

heroines, Magawisca turns to prayer when trapped in a seemingly hopeless situation. Imprisoned and unable to rescue Everell from execution, she catches sight of the morning star through the aperture of her dwelling. As the narrator explains, “this beautiful star, alone in the heavens, when all other lights were quenched, spoke to the superstitious, or, rather, the imaginative spirit of Magawisca” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 90). Hence, Sedgwick recasts what many in her day would have deemed superstitious in a new light. This strategy gains power through Magawisca’s subsequent prayer, for the “morning star” to which she appeals is a well-known biblical symbol for Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:19, Revelation 22:16).

Sedgwick’s clever cloaking of Magawisca’s pantheistic faith within a biblical framework not only contributes to her vision of diverse female leadership, but it also sets the stage for a striking irony. By portraying Magawisca as a prayerful woman, Sedgwick both makes her someone to whom the majority of her nineteenth-century readers can relate, and also gives her a more orthodox appearance than Cooper’s white New Eve, Alice Munro. When Heyward, Gamut, and the Munro sisters are first captured by Magua and his fellow Hurons, Alice also turns to prayer:

Her hands were clasped before her in prayer, but instead of looking upward to the power which alone could rescue them, her unconscious looks wandered to the countenance of Duncan, with infantile dependency (Cooper, 1983, p. 108).

Cooper’s determination to depict his American Eve as one who is utterly dependent upon male protection also motivates his unflattering (and unconscious) portrayal of her as idolatrous.



In contrast to the helpless Alice, Magawisca's prayer results in her ability to engage in sacrificial actions which make her the most obvious and powerful Christ figure of Sedgwick's three New Eves. In the face of the law's (or Cooper's world of Nature's) most savage consequence—the sacrifice of an innocent victim—Magawisca's imaginative love triumphs. Unlike Cooper's Uncas, who dies in his attempt to rescue Cora, Magawisca loses her arm during her rescue of Everell. She declares, "I have bought his life with my own," (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 93) reflecting her identification with Christ as Savior (Romans 6:23, 8:3). Continuing her parallel, Sedgwick's narrator comments that Magawisca's rescue of Everell is "everything short of a miracle" (1987, p. 93). In reference to this young woman's seemingly impossible feat, she explains, "such is the power of love, stronger than death, that with these inadequate helps, Magawisca scaled the rock, and achieved her generous purpose" (p. 94).

Reflecting the diverse yet unified roles of the trinity, Hope, Nelema, and Magawisca each possess one significantly Christ-like characteristic—that of liberator, healer, or savior—yet none of them exhibit the ability to offer all of these services to their communities. Thus Sedgwick implies the need for diversity among American cultural leaders since a variety of New Eve characters are needed to express her societal vision. Sedgwick's stance is also reminiscent of the empowerment she received from other women within her own life journey, for her societal vision not only includes non-white women, but it also resists the notion that the potential of American women can be encapsulated within descriptions of one flat character such as Cooper's child-like Alice Munro.

In addition, Sedgwick's characterization of Everell is also quite telling in terms of her vision of the New American Adam. Unlike the more commonly known individualistic male hero, Everell values community and is interdependent with at least two of the New Eve characters. Like Hope Leslie, he is also an "unfettered soul" who freely acts according to both his conscience and the needs of the community.

In contrast to Duncan Heyward's preference for the conventional, passive Alice, Everell Fletcher values Hope Leslie's willingness to take positive action in behalf of both herself and others. Much like Sedgwick's New Eve's, Everell is an exemplary character because his strong qualities not only reflect those traits typically attributed to men, but those associated with women as well. That Everell's perceptions and character traits are egalitarian is also implied by his name, of which the first three letters are *Eve*. Indeed, it is Everell's self-sufficiency, mercy, and flexibility that enable him to enter into egalitarian relationships with women.

The correlations between Magawisca's rescue of the New Adam Everell and the behavior of Alice and Magua are important because they support the notion that Sedgwick was refuting Cooper's cultural vision in Hope Leslie. However, these scenes are also of interest because they challenge Cooper's insistence that women are in need of male protection and his belief that both sacrificial and romantic love are "white" constructs (Baym, 1992, p. 29). Cooper does present familial affection and loyalty among his characters; however, unlike Sedgwick, who emphasizes agape love, Cooper's concern is that of marriage lines. Clearly uninterested in depicting his female characters' psychological or emotional inner-workings, Cooper focuses on the social behaviors he

believes to be important (and what he appears to assume his female readership will regard as important) for a successful courtship and marriage—what Baym (1992) describes as “the gendered interrelation of dependency and protection called ‘love’” (p. 29). He does so by setting up a cultural dichotomy in which white gentleman such as Duncan Heyward are capable of providing women with his version of protective “love,” while Indians such as the crass Magua can only express demands for brutal sexuality and forced servitude. For example, when Magua proposes marriage to Cora, she is humiliated by the looks he gives her which “no chaste female might endure” (Cooper, 1983, p. 105). Immediately following such glances, he informs her of what she will experience as his wife. Magua says, “The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison” (p. 105). As Nina Baym (1992) suggests, it is Cooper’s strategy to “implicitly criticize Magua’s Indian attitudes toward women” in an attempt to warn white women of the impossibility of experiencing sacrificial and romantic love outside of their culture (p. 30). In this way, Cooper justifies his rejection of “women’s fantasies of Indian lovers” on the basis that “love is a white cultural construction existing only in white society” (p. 30).

In contrast to Cooper’s handling of white and Indian romance, Sedgwick depicts a happy interracial marriage between Faith Leslie and Oneco. However Sedgwick moves away from a narrow focus on romantic love to include a broader, more imaginative picture of love’s transformative power throughout Hope Leslie. Not only do her characters make explicit references to love’s potential power, but through her playful use of allegory, Sedgwick eventually builds a case for her hopeful American

vision. Doubtlessly, her nineteenth-century readers would have been familiar with the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in which he states, "And so faith, hope, and love abide these three: But the greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13:13).

Therefore, they would have been quick to note that while the Leslie sisters represent the virtues of Faith and Hope, one reflecting "the greatest of these" is seemingly missing.

However, as Hope notes, "love can paint as well as fear," and for the careful reader it becomes clear that the power of love emerges through the New Eve characters' imaginative leadership, which is hallmarked by their resistance to the patriarchy's legalism (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 96).

Indeed, of the novel's heroines, it is only in Magawisca's case that creative love does not appear to triumph over patriarchal law in the end. For we are told that both she and Faith "pilgrimage to the far Western forests" (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 339). From a *symbolic* standpoint, Faith's long absences and final disappearance do not matter. For scripturally, faith does not require sight in that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). In other words, the fact that Faith is not always physically present in the novel does not mean that the virtue of faith is necessarily missing from the new republic. On the other hand, it is possible that Faith's final disappearance is Sedgwick's way of chiding her present-day readers for their *faithless* assumption that the displacement of indigenous peoples is an "American" necessity.

However, that Magawisca–Hope's direct double—is eclipsed is disturbing. For if Cooper's perspective necessitates that his novel end with the assurance that Chingachgook is the last of the Mohicans, then Sedgwick's alternative cultural vision

should not end with a tribute to the last of the Pequods. However, in light of Sedgwick's perspective that the United States would mature towards love and of her determination to present seventeenth-century Pequot women as potential New Eves, it is clear that she did not approve of her own century's fearful response towards indigenous peoples.

Although both authors conclude their novels with at least partial tributes to vanishing Native Americans, the overall tone of their conversations is different. Cooper's spatial vision insists upon the exclusion of an Indian presence and a woman's voice in order to ensure that his Adamic hero has room in which to push past civilization's confines. In contrast, Sedgwick's cultural perspective holds out hope for a more mature republic in which diverse women are free to act as leaders in liberty. Incorporating the heart, spirit, and mind, Sedgwick suggests possibilities for an American journey—both on a personal and a cultural level—which reflect the holistic and inclusive life approach of “the female conscience” (Kelley, 1987, xxxv). In short, the ways in which Sedgwick challenges Cooper's cultural vision, while at the same time reshaping the deeply embedded Adamic myth, offers insight into the forces against which she wrote her life.

Although Sedgwick was determined to influence American culture, as an early nineteenth-century woman her avenues for doing so were limited. The novel format, then, provided her with a safe haven from which she could experiment with her cultural and personal identity construction. In the next chapter, I will discuss some of the ways

in which Sedgwick used Hope Leslie to work through many of the familial and cultural tensions that composed her life journey.

### End Notes

1. Due to the work of L. A. Fielder (1966), R. W. B. Lewis (1955), and F. O. Matthiesson (1941), the individualistic male literary protagonist of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is regarded as “the New American Adam.” While some novels found in the canon do explicitly support this label, for the most part the Adamic tradition is a descriptor constructed by twentieth-century scholars to support a prototype character as the quintessential American. Ironically, nineteenth-century novels outside of the canon make direct references to the Genesis story for the purpose of constructing American protagonists who differ from the extreme individualism now associated with the New American Adam tradition. In other words, women novelists who are now excluded from the canon actually supported a New Eve and a New Adam tradition much earlier and more explicitly than did those who are credited with the convention. Significantly, writers such as Sedgwick and E. D. E. N. Southworth incorporated the culturally influential Adam and Eve story in order to characterize the ideal Americans as interdependent and community oriented rather than wholly individualistic story.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NOVEL IDENTITIES: SEDGWICK'S *HOPE LESLIE* AS EXPERIMENTAL GROUND FOR PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

"The simple act of telling a woman's story from a woman's point of view is a revolutionary act... Women writers who name the gap between men's stories about women and women's own perceptions of self and the world are engaged in creating a new literary tradition" (Carol Christ 1986).

"Identity is the unity I find in a self if I look at it as though it were a text" (Norman Holland 1975).

#### Autobiographical Traditions: Mapping A Gendered Journey

"Perhaps I might tell a short and pleasant story to my darling Alice," wrote Catharine Maria Sedgwick in an 1851 letter to her namesake niece Kate's husband, William Minot. Aware of her extreme modesty, Minot persuaded Sedgwick to write her autobiography, not on the basis of her international renown as an author, but for the sake of his daughter (and her beloved great niece) Alice.<sup>1</sup> However, what Sedgwick described as a "short and pleasant story," and later as her "collection of memories," not only incorporated important historical details of social and political growth in antebellum America, but also stepped away from the literary traditions of notable male autobiographers (such as Benjamin Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson) who presented the self as moving towards separation and individuation (Kelley, 1993, p. 5). In contrast, Sedgwick's autobiographical work stresses "reciprocal commitment" and "sanctions connection," in a way which biographer Mary Kelley (1993) cites as similar to the alternative women's tradition initiated by fourteenth-century Englishwoman

Julian of Norwich's Divine Revelations and fifteenth-century Margery Kempe's Book of Margery Kemp (pp. 5-6).

Like Sedgwick, who “presented herself as entirely interwoven with others,” many of the medieval women mystics depicted their identity construction as something that emerged from their interconnection with others (Kelley, 1993, p. 40). For example, Julian of Norwich's entire manuscript focuses on May 8, 1373– the day of her “shewings” of the crucifixion of Jesus–in which she experienced her own wounded body as being “conflated” with that of Christ's. Leigh Gilmore cites this “assimilation of bodies and identities” as the center of Julian's self representation, for it is her *interior* journey, or her growing understanding of self in relationship to the divine *other*, from which Julian constructs her identity (1994, p. 140). That Julian presented her life only in terms of how it was woven with another's (in her case “the divine other,” or God) becomes more significant when seen in the light of conventional expectations for autobiographical works.

Leigh Gilmore (1994) points out that traditionally, “differing codes of masculinity” (such as poet, scholar, hero), or the “representative man,” are woven throughout the autobiographical form. Critical ideologies emerge from the assumption that the subject and object of a life narrative are to be “a man regarding another man,” who is reflecting upon *himself*, as opposed to autobiographical patterns which entertain the possibility of women's participation in self-representation (Gilmore, 1994, p. 2). Therefore, male-oriented storylines are accepted as the “natural” pattern for autobiography, while what women write “belongs to some ‘homelier’ and minor



traditions” (p. 2). It is little wonder, then, that a modest woman surrounded by nineteenth-century gender conventions, such as Sedgwick, would hedge writing a public self-representation in favor of penning a more humble “collection of memories” for her niece. Not only was Sedgwick writing against nineteenth-century expectations and restrictions which did not align with her own life choices (such as her decision not to marry and her determination to actively influence her culture), but she was also representing her life journey in ways that differed from culturally authorized autobiographical modes and patterns. Rather than detailing the obstacles she surmounted and the steps she took in a linear and individualistic quest for public accomplishment, Sedgwick’s autobiographical work disrupts traditional assumptions regarding life narratives, in that it is rooted in relationships and emphasizes an *interior* journey.

Like so many women before (and after) her, Sedgwick’s interior journey involved coming to terms with and negotiating a place for herself within patriarchal systems that did not regard her experiences as a part of the norm. In addition, it necessitated the difficult balance of constructing a voice that aligned with her heart, mind, and spirit; while still maintaining her connections to others. DeWaal notes that “this holding together of opposites, this living with contradictions, presents us not with a closed system but with a series of open doors” (p. 23).

What is significant about the similarities between Sedgwick’s and that of other women’s autobiographies (such as many women mystics) is that their works call attention to the reality that identity construction *is* gendered. In other words, how we

construct our identities—the restrictions, expectations, and opportunities that inform this ongoing process—is determined to a large extent by social perceptions of gender. That many women constructed autobiographies that emphasized relationships rather than the traditional (male) “norm” of individuation reflects the notion that their experiences—and therefore identities—emerged from within their own and others’ understandings of gender.

Munro (1998) maintains that “how individuals construct their stories, the tensions, the contradictions, and the fictions, signifies the very power relations and discursive practices against which [they] write [their] lives” (p. 5). Therefore, many women’s relationally oriented life stories also incorporated avenues which enabled them to transcend gender-related restrictions. Prior to her own explicitly autobiographical writings (1851), Sedgwick presented aspects of her identity within a novel format because this indirect means offered her a way to say more—to move around and beyond gender related restrictions. It would seem that Sedgwick was indeed following in a type of women’s autobiographical tradition, for women such as Julian of Norwich were also able to effectively “write against” socially constructed gender restrictions by shaping their form and content to transcend such limitations. As Gilmore explains, mystical writing “stands outside” of gender due to the New Testament understanding that “in Christ there is no male or female.” Although Julian’s account depicts Jesus as mother and emphasizes the maternal love of God, she does so in order to highlight qualities associated with motherhood, such as “love and kindness, wisdom, knowledge, [and] goodness,” rather than to specify a biological or social category (Gilmore, 1994, p.

146). Within Julian's manuscripts Gilmore argues that "gender is denaturalized, for it no longer attaches persons to their acts according to gender expectations" (1994, p. 146).

Indeed, Sedgwick's willingness to reflect upon and to work out her own contradictory life situations within the context of her novel enabled her to reshape patriarchal restrictions, re-envision family and community possibilities, and to accept both the strengths and limitations of others. The very character of her journey implies a life woven from quiet yet powerful disruptions and turnings of dominant storylines rather than a linear progression towards achievement.

In spite of the fact that she wrote an autobiography in her later years, it is within her "fiction" that Sedgwick takes her greatest risks at experimenting with both personal and cultural identity construction. As Gilmore (1994) contends, women's autobiographical modes—that have a relation to the 'real'—are often unrecognized when written against or within traditional patterns of self-representation, so it is reasonable to assume that women utilized other—supposedly "homelier" literary forms—to construct and depict their life journeys. Written twenty-four years prior to her 1851 autobiography,<sup>2</sup> Sedgwick's most popular novel Hope Leslie (1827)—which emphasizes the cultural leadership of women—provides a "generative space for understanding not only the complexity of women's lives, but also how women construct a gendered self through narrative" (Munro, 1998, p. 5). Therefore, throughout this chapter I will draw on Sedgwick's autobiographical works—as well as additional biographical information—in order to glean clues regarding how her interior journey and self representation within Hope Leslie differs from the linear, individualistic, public journeys

associated with traditional autobiographical forms. In particular, I will examine how her novel provided Sedgwick with unique spaces from which to construct a journey that often emerged from her creative balancing and reshaping of life contradictions.

However, before Sedgwick's negotiation of patriarchal limitations and life contradictions is explored, it is important to examine the advantages which her use of a novel played for working out her own life story.

#### Novel Spaces: The Advantages and Ethics of Exploring "Homelier" Ground

One obvious advantage to Sedgwick's use of the novel form as a mode for constructing her journey was the sense of safety it provided her. Whereas, dominant "interpretive frames make autobiography knowable as a truth script" (Gilmore, 1994, p. 2), writing viewed entirely as "fiction" is less authoritative and therefore a part of that socially acceptable, "homelier" realm to which women are relegated. Joanne Dobson's observations regarding the writings of another nineteenth-century woman novelist, E.D.E.N. Southworth, provide insight into why a novel such as Hope Leslie provides an important experimental space for both Sedgwick and her readers' interior journeys. In an introduction to Southworth's The Hidden Hand, Dobson (1996) notes that the conventional literary elements employed in affective novels

provided a means of reminding both author and reader that they too were "safe" in this exploration of gender possibilities, because the realm in which they were operating was a purely literary one (xxvii).

Thus, Sedgwick's writing strategies also incorporated the needs of her female readership, for the novel form's dialogic qualities provide a safe space for both authors

and readers to experiment with their relationships between their ever changing selves and cultures (Munro, 1998, p. 5; Frye, 1986, p. 4).

What is significant about Sedgwick's reliance on the novel's dialogic qualities in terms of her alternative journey is that her form of representation disrupts myths of growth through individuation (and autobiographical conventions) by reflecting the notion that the self emerges in relationship to society. In her explanation of a "feminist poetics," Joanne Frye (1986) maintains that as readers interact with particular novels, their perceptions of the self, (or their "grid of expectations") and of the "dominant culture's text" change. Not only does this alter them as individuals, but it also contributes towards reshaping generally accepted social paradigms, for "women gain cultural support from other women and thus gain the perceptual capacities for ... reading lives in new ways" (p. 46).

That Sedgwick viewed Hope Leslie as a text well suited for engaging readers in re-interpretations and alterations of limiting cultural and personal paradigms is clear (McKethan, p. 12).<sup>3</sup> Like many nineteenth-century writers, she perceived novels as fulfilling the "dual purpose" of literary enjoyment and moral enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> A definite part of her moral purpose (which she shared in common with numerous other women novelists) was to both disrupt acceptance of restrictive cultural "realities" and to offer new possibilities to members of her female readership.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, it would be difficult to separate Sedgwick's own interior journey from her hopes for the growth of others, as Kelley (1993) notes, in all her writings, "she had insisted upon the signal importance of connection in her relations with others" (p. 40).

As a researcher bent on understanding what the interior journey of a specific, marginalized, nineteenth-century woman novelist can illustrate about life journeys which move around, through—and sometimes in opposition to—culturally dominant progressive storylines, I am aware of the ethical problems involved in presuming to comment on Sedgwick's ways of knowing and being. Situated much like the participant / observer authoring an ethnography, what I choose to explore within Sedgwick's Hope Leslie speaks not only of her life journey and self representation, but also of mine. While moral tension remains an integral part of my study, I am also cognizant of Sedgwick's desire to influence American culture and her obvious intent to engage readers of Hope Leslie in a reciprocal reshaping of reality. In spite of the fact that it has been over one hundred and thirty years since her death, as one of Sedgwick's readers, it is my hope that my own altered (and to my mind much improved) understandings of American culture and my own interior journey will contribute to Sedgwick's legacy of feminist poetics.

#### Hope Leslie: A Contradictory Journey

At the heart of Sedgwick's alternative journey is an acceptance of and an ability to embrace life contradictions. In an 1837 letter, Catharine's brother Charles wrote that of all his sister's gifts, the one for which he was most grateful was "the power of her sympathy" (Kelley, 1993, p. 40). While Catharine exhibited a large capacity for "deep and sustaining identification with others," Kelley (1993) notes that she also placed an equal emphasis on women's freedom to make life choices for themselves. Since nineteenth-century gender conventions demanded that women subordinate themselves to the wishes of men, Sedgwick's insistence that women also had the right to seek

individual fulfillment carried with it enormous implications, for it disrupted a powerful cultural dichotomy which attributed relational connection to women and individual choice to men (Kelley, 1993, p. 40). Nineteenth-century Americans saw choice and connection as binary opposites; therefore, Sedgwick's insistence upon the possibility of having both required a type of creative reshaping. Kelley (1993) explains that

Sedgwick deconstructed this opposition and made connection and choice complementary imperatives for both sexes. Insisting that women should freely and fully choose a life for themselves, she suggested that only then could they just as freely and fully practice connection. No longer marked as exclusively feminine, connection could be a mutual practice for women and men (p. 41).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Sedgwick's creative approach to life contradictions involves a reshaping of cultural restraints in order to align authorized ways of knowing and being with her own emerging self.

Unlike traditional autobiographical storylines which present growth as a simple progression, Sedgwick's handling of contradictions implies a more complex and non-synchronous journey which often emerges from the creative tension involved in embracing two (or more) seemingly opposing viewpoints or character traits. Eudora Welty wrote that "it is our inward journey that leads us through time—forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling" (McKethan, 1990, p. 56). Such "spiraling" or nonlinearity within Sedgwick's interior journey are communicated through her use of Hope Leslie's novel form to investigate and construct her life quest *thematically*. Indeed, Sedgwick uses her novel's form to revisit childhood puzzles and old family themes, often moving between and within various scenes and characterizations to make meaning of life contradictions.

### Reshaping Family Possibilities

In December 1791, Catharine's mother, Pamela Dwight Sedgwick, wrote a letter to her husband asking him to reconsider the toll his political career took on their family. Pamela, whose politician husband Theodore's winter departures left her isolated in the Berkshires with the obligation of running a large household, wrote "I sicken at the thought of your being absent for so long a time" (Kelley, 1993, p. 13). Throughout Catharine's childhood her mother often fell into periods of dark depression which left her bedridden. After one such occasion, Theodore wrote to Catharine's older sisters Eliza and Frances that he had struggled to decide whether to resign his office or to stay in Congress (p. 14). Although Theodore continued his political career and Pamela died at age 54 in 1807, Sedgwick defended her father's career decision in her autobiography written for her great niece Alice. She explained that her father "felt it his duty to remain in public life at every private sacrifice" (Kelley, 1993, p. 14). However, Kelley notes that Sedgwick subverted her own defense by including passages in her autobiography in which she "tallied the costs of Theodore's choice" (p. 14). In reference to her mother she noted that separations from Theodore seemed "to have been almost cruel to her," and that she had "born the terrible weight of domestic cares" (Kelley, 1993, p. 15). Indeed, shortly after she presents her father in a favorable light in her autobiography, she includes her mother's heart wrenching eulogy in its entirety. In the second paragraph she describes Pamela in the following manner:<sup>7</sup>

Through a whole lifetime she never once expressed a feeling of impatience. Such was the strength of her submissive piety; but, from the sensibility of her



temper, she was often afflicted with the severest anguish, from an apprehension that her life was useless (Kelley, 1993, p. 66).

Interestingly, Sedgwick did not openly connect her mother's "submissive piety" with her depression, although it is difficult for modern day readers to avoid seeing the probability that Pamela's gender related deference fed her feelings of uselessness. Instead, her daughter applauded her mother's submission crediting it as proof of her strength and goodness.

Pulled by divided loyalties between her parents' conservative life choices and her own bent towards more egalitarian relationships, Sedgwick did not fully and openly explore the painful consequences of her parents' adherence to socially prescribed gender relations within her explicitly autobiographical work. It is within Hope Leslie that traces of Sedgwick's experiments with familial reshaping are most evident. Many scholars<sup>8</sup> have recognized the strong correlation between the experiences of Pamela and Theodore Sedgwick with those of Hope Leslie's "fictional" Puritan couple Martha and William Fletcher.

In order to understand the strong correlation between Sedgwick's parents and the "fictional" Fletchers, as well as Sedgwick's use of the experimental spaces afforded by Hope Leslie, it is necessary to know Pamela and Theodore Sedgwick's early history. Three years after Theodore married his first wife, Eliza Mason, he contracted small pox and immediately removed himself from their household. However, Eliza also contracted the disease, but because she was pregnant she could not receive an inoculation. Theodore made a difficult recovery, but Eliza died. Although marriage was a practical

necessity for professional men in those times, Theodore waited three years—two years longer than was customary—before he married Pamela Dwight in 1874, the woman who would be the mother of his children. However, Eliza’s influence never left their home.

In her autobiography, Sedgwick writes that shortly after Eliza’s death, her father was lying in bed unable to sleep and wishing that he could see his wife once more. Suddenly, his room filled with light—what Catharine Sedgwick describes as a “heavenly radiance”—and Theodore’s young wife appeared leaning over the end of his bed “with a look of love and happiness”. Throughout her childhood Sedgwick was well aware that from the point of Eliza’s first visitation, her father believed that his “girl-wife” appeared to him once a year in a dream. To her great niece Alice, Sedgwick writes,

She always came to restore to him those days of young romantic love—the passages of after life vanished. I can well remember the sweet, tender expression of my father’s face when he used to say, “I have had my dream!” (Kelley, 1993, p. 57).

One can only wonder how Theodore’s “sweet, tender expression” impacted his second wife Pamela.

Reflecting Pamela Sedgwick’s extreme submission and lonely isolation, Sedgwick constructs a character within Hope Leslie—the dutiful Martha Fletcher—who not only follows her Puritan husband to the New World, but when he becomes dissatisfied with their Boston settlement’s politics, also agrees to move with her family to an isolated wilderness homestead called Bethel. Months later, when her husband William Fletcher’s “true love” Alice is widowed and then dies during her voyage to America, Martha agrees to adopt Alice’s children without question. Displaying similar

deference, the neglected Pamela Sedgwick named her first child after her husband Theodore's former wife Eliza Mason. While Sedgwick writes to her great niece Alice in 1851 that her mother's name choice was "a proof of how generous and unjealous she was," she does so with the knowledge that twenty-four years earlier she had used the pages of Hope Leslie to construct a fuller picture of Pamela's painfully difficult situation.

The subject of a wife's "jealousy" is present in the scene where William informs Martha that they will soon adopt his cousin—and life long love—Alice's children. Early in their conversation, Sedgwick uses William's words to work out a perceived contradiction within her parents union. Not yet aware that Alice is deceased, Martha blushes at the mention of her name. William responds, "Martha, your blushes wrong you. The mean jealousies that degrade some women, have I am sure, never been harbored in your heart" (p. 19). Embedded in Martha's extremely modest response, is a bit of subversion in which the reader can see Sedgwick's refusal to reduce her mother's painful experience of being Theodore's "second choice" to a matter of whether or not she could curtail petty or "mean" jealousy. Martha counters,

If I deserve your praise, it is because the Lord has been pleased to purify my heart and make it his sanctuary. But, if I have not the jealousies, I have the feelings of a woman, and I cannot forget that you was once affianced to your cousin Alice... (p. 19).<sup>9</sup>

Having mentioned her father's love and concern for her mother several times in her later autobiography, Sedgwick uses Hope Leslie as a space to examine how what she

describes at one point as a “perfect union”—or one based upon a type of mutual respect—could also produce so much pain for her mother.<sup>10</sup>

While Martha’s quiet defense of her feelings towards her husband’s relationship with Alice is telling, his own defense of this relationship is more so. Calling his love for Alice “as immortal as the soul,” William reminds Martha that he once told her “frankly, that the affection I gave to her (Alice), could not be transferred to another” (p. 19). Indeed, it seems to be a part of his very mien and character, for he declares that his love for Alice “grew with my growth—strengthened with my strength. Of its beginning, I had no more consciousness than of the commencement of my existence...It inspired every hope—modified every project...” (p. 20). In other words, much like Eliza Mason’s yearly visitations, Alice haunts the Fletcher household.

Interestingly, Pamela’s (and the fictional Martha’s) life theme of being “second choice” is “recycled” in Catharine’s life years after she writes Hope Leslie. Spiraling back to her childhood, Sedgwick’s December 2, 1837 journal entry records how as a child she was “the object of fondest love, of partial exaggerating love” in the lives of her brothers (Kelley, 1993, p. 153). Reminiscent of the favor Sedgwick’s character Hope receives from the Fletcher family and her relatives, Catharine’s experience of being first in her brothers’ lives informed the domestic relations of her title character. However, returning to Hope Leslie’s equally powerful theme—that of being second choice—Catharine seeks to make meaning of what losing first place means in terms of her present and her future. Thus, the cyclical and thematic composition of her *alternative journey* is evident.

### Reciprocal Growth: Re-reading Lives and Stories

Exploring the tensions of her own family life through the Fletcher's relationship, Sedgwick broadens her personal scope to encompass American culture. Through her characterization of Martha Fletcher, Sedgwick hints to her female readership that complete submission to patriarchal demands and values can be destructive, and in some cases even fatal. Although both Pamela and the fictional Martha die within the boundaries of their domestic circles, it is at first glance from seemingly different causes. Refusing to remove her family to the safety of her settlement's fort without the advice of her absent husband, Martha, her baby, and several small children are killed during a Pequot attack. Also longing for her husband's presence and advice, Pamela finally passes away after a lifetime of severe depression and overwhelming domestic cares.

The right and responsibility of women to listen to their own consciences is a major theme in Hope Leslie, and the point from which Sedgwick re-envision possibilities for the American family. Reflecting her mother Pamela's situation of running a complicated household while her husband is away, Sedgwick places Martha Fletcher in a similar position when William travels to Boston for "three seasons." Although in the end Martha's feminocentric world—or community focused on a particular woman's ways of knowing and being—is destroyed, it flourishes for the majority of her husband's absence due to her loving and enthusiastic management. In contrast to traditional understandings of family, the happily unmarried Sedgwick depicts Martha's pleasant domestic circle as being comprised of children and adults who for the most part are not biologically related to each other or to Martha. In spite of her often

ethnocentric speech, Martha's capacity to manage a household fueled by human sympathy, or love, is evident. At one point Magawisca tells Mrs. Fletcher, "Thou hast been more than true; thou hast been kind to me as the mother-bird that shelters the wanderer in her nest" (p. 39).

Munro (1998) states that "the use of language—the myths, metaphors, and imagination—in the way that individuals construct a self is a political act" (p. 4). Indeed, Sedgwick's depiction of Mrs. Fletcher as a successful leader within her own garden in the wilderness is a reshaping of the sacred myth in the Book of Genesis which has habitually been interpreted as a rationale for denying women leadership since the first woman Eve has traditionally received sole blame for the fall of humanity. Although this domestic paradise is destroyed—in part—as a result of Martha's indecision, unlike traditional interpretations of the Adam and Eve story, the forces which ruin this garden are the result of the dictates of patriarchal "wisdom," rather than a woman's quest for knowledge. Significantly, it is only when Martha dismisses the knowledge of women, such as the mother-figure Nelema's visual warnings, young Magawisca's ability to name and to interpret Nelema's symbols, and her own intuition and experience, in favor of outside, patriarchal instructions, that her "garden in the wilderness" is destroyed. Unlike Catharine Sedgwick, Martha is ultimately unwilling to creatively balance her culture's seemingly contradictory values of connection and freedom of individual conscience.

It is likely that the glimpse Sedgwick gives us of a family situation built upon diversity and managed by a woman arose from her relationship with her family's free African-American servant, Elizabeth Freeman, or "Mumbet," rather than with her

mother. In contrast to the initial success Sedgwick gives Martha Fletcher's matriarchy, in her autobiography she connects the domestic happiness of her early childhood only with the times her father was at home (Kelley, 1993, p. 15).<sup>11</sup> The feeling of community depicted at Bethel was not something Pamela Sedgwick felt empowered to create, for at one point she wrote to Theodore that in his absence the family was "like a soul without a body" (Kelley, 1993, p. 13). During the periods when Pamela was incapacitated by illness, Sedgwick turned to Mumbet, whom she describes in her journal as "mother" and "tender nurse," for nurture and guidance. In reference to Sedgwick's autobiography, Kelley (1993) notes that "Mumbet emerged as the most exceptional individual, regardless of sex. Still more telling, she emerged as the woman with whom Sedgwick most deeply identified..." (p. 6).

Although it is problematic that Sedgwick depicts Mumbet as something of an "icon," and that she does not appear to notice the racial and class hierarchy embedded within their relationship, it is also clear that Elizabeth Freeman's "iron resolution" and "intelligent industry" provided Catharine with an important example of female leadership (p. 70). In her autobiography she refers to Mumbet when she says

I believe dear Alice, that the people who surround us in our childhood, whose atmosphere enfolds us, as it were, have more to do with the formation of our characters than all our didactic and preceptive education. Mumbet had a clear and nice perception of justice, and a stern love of it, an uncompromising honesty in word and deed, and conduct of high intelligence, that made her the unconscious moral teacher of the children she tenderly nursed (Kelley, 1993, p. 70).

Thus, Sedgwick's relationship with Mumbet contributed to her imaginative reshaping of the family, for Mumbet's capacity to create community, along with her example of

strength enabled Sedgwick to see possibilities for diverse domestic circles based on matriarchal leadership. An implication of Sedgwick's vision as it is presented in Hope Leslie is that possibilities for leadership and community emerge when women are willing and insightful enough to deconstruct and reshape the conventionally contradictory values of connection and freedom of conscience.

#### Negotiations with Elitism in the Democratic Experiment

Sedgwick also used Hope Leslie as a space from which to depict and to explore her parent's and her own responses to antebellum America's changing social order. As a Federalist, Theodore Sedgwick maintained a paternalistic approach to politics. It was his view that the new republic might "be the happiest government in the world, but not without a strong aristocratic element"(Kelley, 1993, p. 9). As a child Sedgwick frequently heard her father refer to the "lower orders" who wished to play a role in their country's politics as "miscreants" and "Jacobins" (p. 9).<sup>12</sup>

It was not until her adulthood that she and her brothers gradually exchanged their father's elitist politics for a more egalitarian perspective.

While Sedgwick depicts social and political views in Hope Leslie which are far different from those supported by the Federalists, she does not present characters associated with the older order in a simplistic fashion. Torn between admiration for what she deemed as honorable in her parents' characters and her eventual disapproval of their cultural visions, once again, her interior journey emerges from her creative balancing of contradictions. It is through her characterizations of Martha and William Fletcher that Sedgwick works out these life tensions.



By the election of 1800, Federalists had lost power in the United States Congress. The majority of Americans had taken the “democratic experiment” to heart (at least in terms of themselves) and could not sympathize with a paternalistic party (Kelley, 1993, p. 8). In spite of what her daughter saw as a generally gracious spirit, Pamela Sedgwick held on to the old order, in that she insisted that the servants eat at the kitchen table rather than at the dining table with the family (p. 8). Aware of this contradiction (which was well known by local residents),<sup>13</sup> Catharine constructs a fuller picture of Pamela by intermingling much compassion—as well as moments of tolerance—with Martha Fletcher's paternalism. Preceding the scene in which Martha is introduced to Magawisca (who will be her domestic servant), Sedgwick reminds readers of Martha's general bent towards kindness by arranging a conversation in which she expresses joy over the notion that all people have the capacity to be accepted by God—an idea which the majority of Puritans did not favor. That such religious issues are also matters of class in the world of Sedgwick's novel, rests on the notion that in a theocracy such as the Boston and Bethel settlements, inclusive perspectives regarding each individual's capacity for salvation are in actuality, harbingers of democracy. Although class differences are evident in Hope Leslie's wilderness setting, the greatest division between people (aside from gender) is not that of aristocrat and commoner, but that of Puritan and Native American.

Upon meeting Magawisca, Sedgwick makes it clear that Martha's paternalistic welcoming statements are motivated by kindness. In a friendly tone, Martha says

Magawisca, you are welcome among us girl. You should receive it as a signal mercy, child, that you have been taken from the midst of a savage people, and set in a Christian family (p. 24).

Following her speech, Martha is genuinely surprised at Magawisca's lack of assent.

What is particularly interesting about this scene is Sedgwick's strategy of juxtaposing Martha's statements with the comments of two other characters in order to express her disapproval of Martha's (and in effect her mother's) paternalism, while at the same time, not reducing her entire personality to one negative trait or blind spot. Immediately following Martha's welcome, the family's "middle-aged serving woman," Jennet, reinterprets Martha's comments when she says, "Mistress Fletcher means that you should be mightily thankful, tawney, that you are snatched as a brand from the burning" (p. 24). Thus, Jennet's extreme rudeness enables readers to see that Martha's misguided and destructive speech is not totally devoid of kindness.

However, Sedgwick also expresses her disapproval of Martha and her mother's "old order" perspectives by juxtaposing the Puritan woman's statements with the responses of her son Everell. Furthering her misguided attempts to comfort the newly arrived Magawisca, Martha shares that she will soon realize that the Puritans' "civilized" ways are far better than those of the Pequods, which Martha characterizes as "but little superior to those of the wolves and foxes"(p. 24). Countering Martha's paternalism, Sedgwick emphasizes its limitations through the response of Everell, who notes that "hunted, as the Indians are, to their own dens, I am sure, mother, they need the fierceness of the wolf, and the cunning of the fox" (p. 24). Drawing from these two divergent perspectives, Sedgwick represents her parent's—and in particular her

mother's-life contradictions. In response to Everell's observation, Martha answers, "True-true, my son," to which the narrator explains that Mrs. Fletcher "really meant no unkindness in expressing what she deemed a self-evident truth" (p. 24). Thus, readers are able to catch glimpses of Sedgwick's perceptions of the contradictory blend of humanitarianism and elitism in her mother Pamela.

Sedgwick also uses Hope Leslie to explore the specific contradictions present in her father Theodore. In 1799, a visiting European nobleman, The Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, wrote of Theodore Sedgwick that "in all the private relations of society he is an excellent man, but in his politics he is somewhat warm, and not a little intolerant" (Foster, 1974, p. 28). Arrogant and authoritarian, Theodore's patriarchal notions of power within his home and his elitist views of politics within the new republic somehow co-existed with a conviction that slavery was unjust (Foster, 1974, p. 29). A key to how such contradictory views could find a balance within the same person is evident through his legal defense of the enslaved Elizabeth Freeman, or "Mumbet". Having overheard discussions between her lawyer owner Colonel John Ashley and his colleagues, Freeman realized that according to the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights her slave status was illegal. After being hit over the head with a shovel by Mrs. Ashley, Freeman appealed to Theodore Sedgwick for help. In spite of the fact that John Ashley was a long time associate, a relative, and politically powerful, Theodore "put moral right above other considerations" (Foster, 1974, p. 29). In 1781, with Sedgwick acting as her counsel, Freeman challenged the constitutionality of her enslaved status in the Berkshire

County Court and won (Kelley, 1993, p. 17). Her victory set a precedent for the abolition of slavery throughout the state of Massachusetts (p. 17).

Apart from Elizabeth Freeman's bravery, agency, and victory, what is significant about this story in terms of Catharine's father is the importance he placed on "moral rights" or principles in making life decisions. Unable to understand the specific emotional needs of his wife, or the individuality of the "miscreant" "lower orders" who vied for "his" political power, the honorable and aristocratic Theodore Sedgwick operated on general ideals and principles which enabled him to see the injustice of the institution of slavery.<sup>14</sup>

While possessing honorable ideals and a clear sense of duty, William Fletcher is aware of the injustice of slavery, but blind to the unequal distributions of power in his own home and community. Intermingled in the conversation that William has with Martha concerning their adoption of Alice's children are not only numerous examples of his arrogance and insensitivity, but also instances of compassion and evidence of deeply held convictions regarding the equality of various people groups. When William intimates that the increased workload brought on by Alice's two children will be partially relieved by the assistance of a young Pequod woman, Magawisca, Martha comments, "I am glad if any use can be made of an Indian servant" (p. 21). Sedgwick uses this moment to reflect some of her father's (and her own) ideas regarding racial equality. William replies, "How any use! You surely do not doubt, Martha, that these Indians possess the same faculties that we do" (p. 21). At still another point, in speaking of how a group of captured Pequod's were sold into slavery, he remarks "I blush to say it, for 'it

is God's gift that every man should enjoy the good of his own labour” (p. 21).

Reminiscent of her father, Sedgwick describes William Fletcher as a man of an “ardent temperament” and a “disinterested love of his species” (p. 15). Sedgwick also depicts him as being like Theodore in that he is motivated by his allegiance to abstract ideals and to duty. Removed from the contextualized realities of his community (the more densely populated Boston) and his family, William's separatist life approach is much like Sedgwick's career and elitist politics. Ironically, while allegiance to abstract ideals lead both to an understanding of slavery's injustice, it also appears to block them both from exercising more sensitive and egalitarian social perspectives.

Although Catharine Sedgwick's Hope Leslie provided a space from which she could shape her cultural vision, critique her parents' elitism, and depict aspects of their contradictory lives in a non-reductive manner, she was not without her own contradictory struggles with elitism. Due to her gender, Sedgwick felt the need to give credence to both her writing career and to her promotion of egalitarian democracy. Ironically, the most effective support for Sedgwick's authority to participate in her country's cultural reshaping was her status as a member of an elite family. In 1836, Sedgwick wrote to her well-connected friend Louisa Minot that “In this country we must do everything for the majority” (Kelley, 1993, p. 31). A year later she implied in a letter to William Ellery Channing that the shaping of American culture was “work to which we are clearly sent” (p. 30). By embracing two divergent streams, that of her claim to authority on the basis of her elite background and that of Hope Leslie's more

inclusive democratic vision, Sedgwick overcame gender related restrictions to construct a socially sanctioned rationale for her cultural vision and her career as a novelist.

### Married or Single?<sup>15</sup>

At a time when nine out of ten American women married, Catharine Sedgwick resisted the attentions of numerous suitors and made the decision to remain single (Kelley, 1993, p. 3). Woven throughout this strand of Sedgwick's interior journey was, once again, the creative tension of her determination to balance both human connection and freedom of choice. Significantly, she closes Hope Leslie by refuting the notion that in order to live happy and meaningful lives, women are obligated to marry. Referring to Esther Downing's decision to remain single in order "to devote herself to Christian duty," Sedgwick's narrator comments,

She illustrated a truth, which, if more generally received by her sex, might save a vast deal of misery: that marriage is not *essential* to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of woman. Indeed, those who saw on how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not "Give to a party what was meant for mankind" (p. 350).

Most likely, Sedgwick's unconventional ending as well as her own decision not to marry were due—in part—to the suffering she witnessed within her family and in particular in the lives of her two sisters. As Mary Kelley (1993) notes, the marriages of Frances and Eliza were "cautionary tales" (p. 23).

Although when referring to Frances's marriage to Ebenezer Watson in her autobiography, Sedgwick merely states that her sister "endured much heroically," in a letter to her sister Eliza, she is more specific. Calling Frances' husband "essentially

diabolical,” Sedgwick also writes, “Mr. Watson is brutal in his conduct to her and does and has for a long time rendered her miserable” (Kelley, 1993, p. 23). Frances chose to remain with her abusive husband because she did not want to be separated from her children. That Sedgwick's older sister could be in such a serious long-term dilemma, highlights the powerlessness of nineteenth-century married women, for women who divorced or became separated from their husbands were rarely granted rights to see their children (Kelley, 1993, p. 23).

While Eliza's marriage to Thaddeus Pomeroy was much more positive, it was by no means egalitarian. Sedgwick described her sister's husband as “a man who followed after the old pattern—resolute, fearless, enduring, generous, with alterations of austerity, of impulsiveness and rigidity” (p. 24). Eliza, who was burdened with poor health, also bore the additional responsibility of mothering twelve children.

While the suffering endured by her sisters encouraged Sedgwick to approach the idea of marriage with caution, her brothers' friendships provided both the depth of human connection and the opportunities for individual fulfillment that Sedgwick needed to continue to work out her life journey as a single woman. According to Kelley (1993), her brothers Theodore, Harry, Robert, and Charles were “central” to her decision to remain single (p. 29). Not only did their interest in her life fulfill much of Sedgwick's need for family, but at the heart of their relationships was a sense of equality. In her autobiography, Sedgwick wrote

I can conceive of no truer image of the purity and happiness of the equal loves of Heaven than that which unites brothers and sisters. It has been my chiefest

blessing in life, and, but that I look to its continuance hereafter, I should indeed be wretched (Kelley, 1993, p .89).

When contrasted to her sisters's marriages, it is easy to understand why the independent Sedgwick would prefer the family support of her brothers over the risk of marital oppression.

What was also unusual about Sedgwick's relationship with her brothers was that they encouraged her career as a writer. Indeed, her second brother, Harry, actively influenced his sister's vision to act as a cultural leader through her writing. As a part-time editor of Boston's Weekly Messenger, Harry explained to his sister that he needed to print her writing in order to encourage other young women to submit their work. In a letter written to Catharine in 1812, he noted, "How confidently shall I claim for 'my fair countrywomen' the need of their genius; how triumphantly shall I prove their precocity of intellect" (Kelley, 1993, p. 30). It is also important to note that her other brothers "joined forces" with Harry to encourage Sedgwick to write her first novel, A New England Tale (1822) (p. 30).

Reflecting the loyalty and support of her brothers, Hope Leslie's Everell—Sedgwick's new American Adam character—also showcased a sense of equality in his relations with women. Not only does Sedgwick arrange for Everell to be rescued by Magawisca, but her narrator describes him as sharing "an elective affinity" with Hope. His humor, flexibility, and respect are reminiscent of what Sedgwick viewed as a "beau ideal," or what would be necessary for a successful marriage.



Significantly, however, Sedgwick does not choose her title character, Hope, to represent the possibility of a single life for women. While she does seek to normalize a woman's decision to remain single, she does not necessarily recommend her choice to all women. Unwilling to give that impression, Sedgwick arranges for the novel's representative "American Eve" to enter into a union of equal power and respect. As Kelley (1993) notes, Sedgwick was well aware that "financial independence had made [her] choice possible. Devoted siblings had relieved the isolation" (p. 151).<sup>16</sup>

Although Sedgwick's journal provides evidence of times when she seriously re-evaluated her life decisions, as well as some struggles with loneliness, such reflections are part of the creative tension which characterizes an interior journey in which both a powerful human sympathy and a freedom to choose are exercised. While traditional journeys offer neat conclusions in which a man finally returns home, McKethan (1990) notes that for the women writers in her research, home is that point in an interior journey when a woman author feels the freedom to exercise creativity. Apparently for Sedgwick, both "home" and creative freedom were experienced "in so many houses and so many hearts" (Kelley, 1993, p. 39).

#### End Notes

1. In light of Sedgwick's subtle implication in Hope Leslie that a young woman named "Alice"—Hope's name before she is re-christened in the Puritan community—represents new possibilities for American womanhood, or the new American Eve, it is interesting that her deeply beloved niece Kate would choose the same name for her own daughter.
2. That Sedgwick's autobiography was an unplanned project, adds credence to the notion that earlier in her life she would use fiction as a cite for experimenting with self representation.

3. Reflecting her spiritual journey from orthodox Congregationalism to Unitarianism, Sedgwick's popular novel A New England Tale (1822) was an expanded version of what was originally a Unitarian tract. Thirteen years later –due to the urging of the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr.– she would seek to share her emerging views on religion and American morality by experimenting with a new literary form which Kelley (1993) quotes as standing “between a formal tale and a common tract”(p. 149).

4. The nineteenth-century view that good literature dealt with moral and cultural concerns is also evident in popular periodicals of the day. Kelley (1987) notes that The American Ladies Magazine praised Sedgwick as “an individual who has done so much for our literature and morals” (x).

5. A glimpse at Sedgwick's particular concern for the welfare of young women is evident in a November 11, 1835 journal entry, in which she records news of a conversation she had with educator and reformer Elizabeth Peabody concerning a “mill girl's” response to her recently published Home (1835). Sedgwick writes,

Miss Peabody called in the P. M. Miss P. gratified me very much with the testimony of an intelligent, *orthodox* factory girl about Home. She said if they would spend their Sundays in Lowell, as recommended in the book, how much good might be done. This is better than the opinion of half the ministers in New England” (Kelley, 1993, p. 150).

Sedgwick's deep satisfaction over having reached the heart and mind of an “*orthodox*,” or Congregationalist, “factory girl,” speaks both of her general concern for altering what she viewed as extreme Calvinism's oppressive mindsets (a belief in predestination) and of her particular regard for the welfare of young women. She presents herself as being less interested in the opinions of patriarchal authorities than in the changing perceptions of one young woman.

6. In this point, as in many, Sedgwick's work reflects a women's philosophical and literary tradition. Catharine MacCaulay, an eighteenth-century British educational theorist, also deconstructed gender conventions which deemed particular aspects of intelligence and character as strictly feminine or masculine.

7. While Sedgwick claims that her brother Harry wrote their mother's eulogy, there is evidence that she wrote it.

8. In a curriculum theory doctoral seminar conducted at L. S. U. in the spring semester 2000, the majority of participants readily saw the correlation between the Fletchers and Catharine Sedgwick's parents.

9. Perhaps an even more pointed statement from Martha concerning her status as William's “second choice” is a comment to which William cannot immediately reply because it is written in a letter she pens while he is away in Boston. Martha notes, “I have ever known that mine was Leah's portion—that I was not the chosen and the loved

one; and this has sometimes made me fearful—often joyless—but remember, it is only the perfect love of the husband that casteth out the fear of the wife” (p. 35).

10. That Sedgwick is drawing correlations between Martha Fletcher’s experience and that of her mother becomes more clear through some of the details she chooses for this scene. At one point he tells Martha that his love for Alice is “immortal,” and echoing the words of Theodore Sedgwick, he wishes to see his deceased love “just once more.”

11. Theodore’s consistent absences were so deeply ingrained on the psyche of the Sedgwick household that two of Catharine’s first words were connected to that issue. Kelley (1993) notes that “‘Theodore’ and ‘Philadelphia’ were words that signified the felt reality of her father’s absence”(p. 15).

12. Sedgwick’s desire to maintain a traditional social order in which there was an unquestionable divide between those who were aristocratic and those who were not was increasingly challenged after the Revolutionary War. Kelley (1993) notes that when a bold artisan presented himself at the front door of the Sedgwick’s house and refused to take off his hat, Theodore removed him from his property forcibly (p. 8). With her frequent humor, Catharine remarked that her father had been “‘born too soon to relish the freedoms of democracy’”(p. 8).

13. Biographer Mary Kelley (1993) reports that there was “increasing resistance to Pamela’s practice” (p. 8). When as a young woman Catharine was sent to recruit a local woman’s daughter to act as a servant in the Sedgwick household, the potential servant’s mother lectured “‘Now Catharine, we are all made out of the same clay, we have got one Maker and one Judge, and we’ve got to lay down in the grave side by side. Why can’t you sit down to the table together?’” (p. 8).

14. Theodore Sedgwick’s willingness to make personal sacrifices while appearing to be incapable of being emotionally supportive to his wife, Pamela, reflects Nona Lyon’s (1990) research which suggests that there are two approaches to morality. The following explanation is from her chapter “Listening to the Voices We Have Not Heard,” as cited in Carol Gilligan’s Making Connections (1990):

The construction of morality as involving at least two voices, justice and care, expands the construction of morality described in the dominant model of moral psychology, notably in the work of Kohlberg (1969, 1984). In Kohlberg’s model morality is defined as justice, and moral problems are seen to emerge from the conflicting claims of individuals and to be resolved through objectivity and the application of principles of justice as fairness...But a second construction offers another definition of morality: that is, responsiveness to another. That ethic is called the ethic of care...(p. 41).

15. Married or Single? was both the subject and title of Sedgwick’s last novel.

16. Although satisfied with her choice to remain single, Sedgwick still suffered from the sense that as time progressed, she was not “first” in anyone's life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TESTIMONY AND THE IMAGINATION: HISTORICAL DISRUPTIONS WITHIN SEDGWICK'S JOURNEY

“History is not the representation of reality, it never has been. For the early Greeks, memory was not a means to situate events within a temporal framework but to understand the whole process of becoming (Petra Munro, 1997, p. 266).

“Testimony is treasured to the extent that it saves the shards of catastrophic experience from oblivion” (Simon & Eppert, 1998, p. 177).

Rewriting the present involves re-imagining the past. Just as Sedgwick used Hope Leslie (1827) to work through familial contradictions from her childhood, so too did she re-visit America's historical past in order to create spaces for both herself and other women within their country's historical narrative. Recognizing the integration of past, present, and future, Sedgwick's journey disrupts the linear, progressive, historical grand narrative. Indeed, her most popular novel depicts American history as a complex web of resistance, contradiction, and mystery.

Hope Leslie (1827) not only provides a record of Sedgwick's resistance to the dominant cultural and historical understandings of her day, but it is also credited by current scholars as containing one of the United States' earliest pieces of revisionist history (Gould, 1994; Kelley, 1987). Written during a time when nineteenth-century America was demanding more and more of indigenous peoples' land, Sedgwick's portrayal of the “Pequod Wars” is a direct “challenge to the morality of [her] nation” (Kelley, 1989, xxviii). However, in her Preface Sedgwick seeks to soften the sharp edges of her novel's historical and cultural critiques by claiming that the “real” characters and events to which her narrative alludes “if not strictly necessary” for *fiction*

such as hers, were “found very convenient in the execution of the author’s design, which was to illustrate not the history, but the *character of the times*” (p. 5). By making this disclaimer regarding her role as a historian, Sedgwick not only dodges the criticism and suspicion an antebellum woman challenging accepted historical narratives would likely receive, but she also creates important spaces from which her readers can safely re-think pervasive cultural myths. Rather than emphasize specific points along a temporal framework, Sedgwick’s interest in “the character of the times” implies a historical approach much like that of the early Greeks who valued history as a means “to understand the whole process of becoming” (Munro, 1997, p. 267). As Munro (1997) explains, “history as an evocation of memory becomes our relationship to, and experiencing of, the identities made possible or impossible through historical narrative” (p. 267). A historical novel, then, has the potential to reshape and replace understandings of our most powerful myths—and therefore our cultural identities.

However, disruptions of dominant narratives or deeply entrenched myths are not always readily received. Narrative theorists such as Pam Gilbert (1994), Jim Garrison (1997), and Jerome Bruner (1986) cite the tenacity with which individuals and communities often deny storylines that are in conflict with already entrenched cultural values. In terms of narratives which disrupt historical approaches that are conventional and temporal, Simon and Eppert’s (1998) research with witnessing and testimony indicates that narratives which deal with trauma (i.e. Sedgwick’s depiction of “the Pequot War,” or “the Massacre at Mystic”) “may bring into question the central stories and propositional schemata that order one’s life” (p. 185). When this occurs, faith in the

future is “unhinged” and a type of “disorientation” is often present; for regarded as “sacred,”<sup>1</sup> cultural myths both justify and explain how established modes of living and accepted historical perceptions came to be (Munro, 1997, p. 284; Simon & Eppert, 1998, p. 185). To embrace disruptions of such myths requires a willingness to incorporate “our historical disfiguration” not only into our own stories as individuals, but also into our community’s self representation (Simon & Eppert, 1998, p. 184). Interwoven throughout a community’s shared history, then, myths are difficult to dislodge or reshape.

Within this chapter, I will explore some of the ways in which Sedgwick constructs new perceptions of the American journey—and therefore of her own life quest—by re-visiting the past. Intent upon weaving cultural narratives that were better aligned with her own interior journey, Sedgwick uses Hope Leslie (1827) as a site from which to challenge Puritan and early national historians’ claims to objectivity. Central to Sedgwick’s historical disruptions is the Pequod War, a historical event which conventional histories used to promote both acceptance of military aggression against indigenous peoples and the general adherence to white male leadership. Sedgwick reshapes the overall meaning of the Pequod War not only through her awareness of the underlying myths associated with it, but also by her attention to the ways in which testimony and the imagination influence human—and therefore historical—perceptions. In addition, she illustrates the differences between historical interpretations that are inspired by love and those that are entrenched in fear. However, before discussing these strands within Sedgwick’s journey, I will explain the “mythic” significance of the

Puritans' Pequod War to Jacksonian America, and I will explore possible instances within Sedgwick's journey which increased her awareness of historical disruptions.

The Pequod War: Site for Cultural Shaping

Reprinted one year before Hope Leslie's (1827) publication, John Mason's firsthand account of the Pequod War starts in a manner similar to those of other early Puritan historians' narratives; all of which begin with the murders of three Englishmen—John Stone, John Norton, and John Oldham (Gould, 1994, p. 644). Ignoring the fact that these men had questionable reputations, the four narratives written by participants in the war (Mason, John Underhill, Lion Gardiner, and Philip Vincent), as well as William Hubbard's later history, present these Englishmen as cruelly slaughtered martyrs in order to justify the Puritan claim that the "Pequod War" was a necessary defensive measure against a Pequod conspiracy (Gould, 1994, p. 645). Of Oldham's death, Puritan historians such as Underhill state that "The Indians...knocked him in the head, and martyred him most barbarously, to the great grief of his servants"; similarly Mason writes that Norton and Stone "were cruelly murdered in their sleep" (Gould, 1994, p. 645). Borrowing both the earlier Puritans' content and narrative strategies, William Hubbard also depicts the two Puritan attacks on Mystic, Connecticut as a necessary defensive measure "by melodramatizing the gory deaths of Stone, Norton, and Oldham" (Foster, 1974, p. 75).<sup>2</sup> In short, the vast majority of early histories justify the Puritans' militaristic actions against the Pequods by reinforcing the dichotomy of civilized people and savages.



By the time Catharine Sedgwick's generation appeared on the scene, the belief that the three Englishmen's deaths confirmed a Pequod conspiracy—thereby justifying the Puritans' "defensive" war—was deeply embedded in the mainstream American psyche. Indeed, later historians used the Pequod War to make ideological connections between the Puritan Commonwealth and the early republic in order to promote the recovery of *virtue* as it had been codefied during the Revolutionary War. Both during and after the Revolution, the idea that civic virtue could be equated with war-like "heroism" was supported because it fit within what Gould (1994) terms "the larger context of the myth of the ancient Anglo-Saxon constitution" (p. 648). Militaristic actions were considered heroic because they were done in the name of *liberty*. Political theorists such as Thomas Jefferson and Noah Webster promoted the notion that "the mythic purity of Saxon liberty provided the historical roots of the American republic" (Gould, 1994, p. 649). By the early nineteenth century, the Anglo-Saxon liberty myth was also popularized through political personas such as Andrew Jackson's "Old Hickory"—the hero of the Battle of New Orleans who had saved the republic" (Gould, 1994, p. 648). Thus, by interpreting the early Puritans' involvement in the Pequod War "as an act of superior courage and conduct," later historians could incorporate the Puritans' militaristic actions as a type of support for their existing historical and cultural perceptions. Not only did this "ethos of masculine virtue" appear to sanction Indian displacement, but its militaristic approach also entirely excluded women from participation in the construction of American virtue (Gould, 1994, p. 648; Pinar, 2000, p. 3).

It is little wonder, then, that Sedgwick would be drawn to investigate early historical records for herself. Having embarked on a life journey that involved reshaping cultural narratives that restricted women, it was a “natural” step for Sedgwick to also incorporate American history in her reshaping. For by re-imagining the past, Sedgwick sought to write new possibilities for women and for indigenous peoples.

In her Preface Sedgwick modestly comments that “the only merit claimed by the present writer, is that of a patient investigation of all materials that could be obtained” (Kelley, 1987, p. 5). It is evident that Sedgwick did indeed cull a variety of early histories such as William Hubbard’s Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England, Roger Williams’ Key into the Languages of America, Cotton Mather’s Magnolia Christi Americana, and John Winthrop’s journal. Key to Sedgwick’s alternative historical approach was her insistence that “the historian’s perspective informed the exposition” (Kelley, 1987, xxviii). Differing from both Puritan and early republic historians who maintained that Puritan historical narratives were completely objective, “factual reports,” Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie suggests that “received history itself was more interpretive than objective” (Kelley, 1987, xxviii).

By disrupting the supposed “objectivity” of national narratives, Sedgwick illustrated that history is an intermingling of fact and fiction, and that historians’ interests are the strongest underlying force within that combination. In short, historical accounts served as myths which met the needs of the tellers and their communities. For example, promoting military aggression as a symbol of American virtue and patriotism provided a rationale for both early Puritans’ military aggression and Jacksonian

America's push for Indian displacement. In addition, it supported an American ethos which viewed white males as America's rightful social and political leaders. By deconstructing traditional historical perceptions of Anglo / Pequot relations, Sedgwick created spaces for women to authorize themselves as knowers, in that her historical disruptions created spaces for competing myths—storylines which were more aligned with her own and other women's emerging journeys. Therefore, before discussing Sedgwick's shaping of historical myths within Hope Leslie (1827) it is helpful to gather specific clues regarding possible ways in which historical or mythic disruptions emerged from particular moments within her life journey.

#### Mythic Disruptions in Sedgwick's Life Journey

Although the exact influences that contributed towards Sedgwick's awareness of and ability to critique myths are ultimately unknowable, narrative theorist Pam Gilbert (1994) tells us that spaces for questioning dominant cultural patterns or accepted myths are often created through repeated opportunities for the comparison and juxtaposition of ideas and storylines (p. 146). In contrast to the "masculine ethos" promoted by early nineteenth-century historians was a competing notion of virtue which was popularized in the late eighteenth century. A cultural expectation that women act in the role of "republican motherhood" emerged. In other words, women were enculturated to instill a type of virtue in their homes and communities that reflected Christian benevolence. Such perceptions of virtue were, of course, at odds with the Jacksonian emphasis on military aggression. Therefore, narratives which equated militaristic attacks with virtue and patriotism not only excluded women's contributions from American historical accounts,

but they also obstructed their participation in current cultural leadership. Having walked out a journey which emphasized the need for compassion, kindness, and nurture, it was Sedgwick's desire to celebrate cultural and historical myths which reflected her own experiences along with those of other women.

It is likely that Sedgwick's perspective also benefitted from the fact that the area in which she grew up—Stockbridge, Massachusetts—was “saturated with Indian history” (Foster, 1974, p. 78). Perhaps it was listening to some of these stories which first led her to question early narrative accounts of Native American savagery. Although Sedgwick heard family stories about close calls with the Mohawks—what she describes as tales of “stock terror” from her childhood nursery—she also stumbled upon at least one story which in many ways contradicted the ideology of official historical accounts.

While on a journey to Niagra Falls with her brothers in 1821, Sedgwick arrived at Oneida, New York where she met a distant cousin. In a letter home, she explained that he was the great-grandson of Eunice Williams, a Puritan girl who had been abducted by the Iroquois from her Deerfield home in 1703. Years later when peace was temporarily restored between the two groups, attempts were made to bring Eunice back to New England. However, like Faith Leslie in Sedgwick's novel, the young woman would not return. Foster (1974) notes that having left her family at age seven, she “soon forgot the English language, assumed the new name of Marguerite, and adopted the Catholic religion” (p. 74). In addition, Marguerite married a Catholic Iroquois man and completely adopted her new people group's way of life.<sup>3</sup> Due to Sedgwick's inclusion of a similar plot in Hope Leslie (1827), it is obvious that this story made a strong

impression on her—not only because it was a “celebrated legend,” but because Eunice / Marguerite’s assimilation into and later preference for Native American culture disrupts historical notions of savagery.<sup>4</sup>

At any rate, spaces were somehow created in Sedgwick’s life which equipped her to view the Pequod War differently from perceptions often attributed to the Jacksonian ideologies of her day. Her own historical studies stemmed from a life long commitment to reading. Indeed, through the encouragement of her father, Sedgwick read Rollin’s Ancient History while still a young girl. That her later preparation for Hope Leslie (1827) was thorough is evident through the many historical details she includes within her storyline. For example, the novel’s villain, Sir Philip Gardiner, was modeled after Christopher Gardiner, who though an enemy to the colonists, like Sedgwick’s Sir Philip, posed as their friend. While Sir Christopher is said to have “vanished” from the colony, Sedgwick arranges for her novel’s villain to die when a ship attended by drunken sailors explodes in Boston Harbor. Interestingly, both the unaccountable ship explosion and the drunken crew are part of the colony’s historical record.<sup>5</sup>

While Sedgwick gleaned specific events and images of Puritan culture from early historical narratives, she also noted moments in which their cultural “given”—that colonists’ militaristic attacks against the indigenous peoples were necessary acts of courage—was disrupted. While examining William Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation, Sedgwick uncovered a pivotal letter dated December 19, 1623. Apparently, the clergyman John Robinson—who acted as the pastor for the Puritan group that

migrated to Plymouth—kept in contact with his original congregation through his correspondence with William Bradford. In this particular letter, Robinson expressed sorrow over Miles Standish’s military expedition against a Massachusetts tribe, which resulted in the murder of their leaders (Kelley, 1987, xxx). One sentence in Robinson’s letter appears to have powerfully captured Sedgwick’s imagination, for she selected it as the epigraph for the chapter in which the Pequod woman, Magawisca, narrates an alternative history of “the Massacre at Mystic” (Kelley, 1987, xxx). Robinson laments, “it would have been happy, if they had converted some before they had killed any” (as seen in Kelley, 1987, xxx). Considering Robinson’s Calvinistic world view, his concern for this people group’s spiritual welfare speaks of his respect for their humanity, for unlike many of his contemporaries he obviously believed that among indigenous peoples there were those who were “chosen for salvation.”

Throughout Sedgwick’s search, she made note of similar disruptions scattered within old historical documents. Some came from the dedicated Puritan, Roger Williams, who was nonetheless, “a staunch defender of the Indians” (Kelley, 1987, xxxi). It is from his Key into the Languages of America that Sedgwick pulls the statement for her volume I, chapter II epigraph, “God hath not made the Indian inferior to the Europeans” (Kelley, 1987, xxxi). Williams’s observations regarding the indigenous peoples’ spiritual sensitivity also appear to have influenced Sedgwick’s own depictions of “Indian” and Puritan moral equality (Kelley, 1987, xxxi).

### Disrupting Objectivity: Testimony and the Affect

It is evident that the historical disruptions which Sedgwick experienced in her own reading and research acted as the testimonies of silenced voices. For example, within Sedgwick's journey she received Robinson's letter to Hubbard and Williams' ethnographic records as testimonial spaces for those who could not speak. Simon and Eppert (1998) explain that "testimony is always directed toward another. It places the one who receives it under the obligation of response to an embodied singular experience not recognizable as one's own" (p. 176). For Sedgwick, this involved constructing characters who could embody and give voice to testimonial spaces which had long been neglected within traditional narratives. As a "listener" to testimonial spaces, Sedgwick became "a party to the creation of knowledge," for "the victim's narrative—the very process of bearing witness to trauma—does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence" (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 57). Hope Leslie (1827) then, was Sedgwick's testimony to absence. As Felman (1992) explains, testimony "in effect addresses what in history is *action* that exceeds any substantialized significance, and what in happenings is impact that dynamically explodes any conceptual reifications and any constative delimitations" (p. 5). Rather than simply narrating statements concerning the Puritans' military aggression, the testimony that Sedgwick constructs is potentially transformative because it reflects a performative speech act.

Desiring to add to the credibility of her new record, Sedgwick also exposed the role of the affect within supposedly objective traditional histories. Although Puritan historians such as John Mason claimed that trustworthy historical accounts did not need “to stir up the affections of men,” Gould (1994) points out that Mason along with the majority of Puritan and national historians were well aware of the power of the affect in how they arranged their narratives. By beginning with the sensationalized murders of the Englishmen Oldham, Norton, and Stone, such historians worked to lead their readers to a level of fear and horror which would then quench their sympathy for the Pequods –when at a later point in the narratives—they discovered that Pequot families had died in the flames that had been set to their settlement by Puritans. Desiring to witness to the other side of the coin, Sedgwick simply inverted the traditional pattern of Pequot War narratives so that readers experienced Magawisca’s testimony *before* they learned of the three Englishmen’s deaths. As Gould (1994) explains,

By dislodging the traditional narrative frame for the attack on Mystic, Sedgwick effectively emancipates readerly sympathy for the Pequods consumed by flames, and hence recovers the humanitarian pathos at the core of domestic virtue which Puritan historians—and their early national descendants—successfully suppress (p. 646).

Interestingly, when Sedgwick does mention the Englishmen’s murders, she avoids utilizing the early historians’ graphic descriptions with the wry comment that the incident is “familiar to every reader of our early annals” (p. 56). Perhaps even more telling is that within the same sentence that she mentions the well-known murders, she also reminds her readers of another familiar “anecdote” in which “the wife of Mononotto” protected and “restored to their friends” two English girls who were



captured at Wethersfield. Following this juxtaposition of cruel and kind acts performed by the Pequods, Sedgwick notes that the later story “is precious to all those who would accumulate proofs, that the image of God is never quite effaced from the souls of His creatures” (p. 56). Thus, Sedgwick turns the tables on supposedly objective American historians by inverting (and in some ways following in) their ironically affective narrative tradition.

Indeed, when removed from the context of their fear-driven narratives, the words of Puritan historians often acted as the most powerful testimony against them. For example, in volume I, Chapter IV, Sedgwick pulls Bradford’s testimony from his History of Plymouth Plantation concerning the Great Swamp Fight in which “the Englishmen” set fire to the homes of sleeping Pequot women and children (Kelley, 1987, xxxii; Foster, 1974, p. 75). Bradford notes, “it was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the same” (as seen in Kelley, 1987, xxxii). Far removed from the ideology which viewed such narratives as wholly factual and objective, Sedgwick acts as a witness to her readers in her Preface, in that she suggests to them that they accept highly touted early American documents as “fact” only because they have not heard the testimony of indigenous peoples. Devoid of direct Pequot testimony, Sedgwick’s research led her to witness spaces for differing perspectives: her *imagination* to construct vital historical possibilities.

#### Imagination’s Role in Human / Historical Perceptions

Indeed, while Sedgwick’s use of and emphasis on the affect within rhetorical strategy highlights the interpretive nature of historical narratives, in particular, it is

through her *imagination* that she successfully bears witness to silenced voices and alternative histories. One reason that Sedgwick's creative construction of Magawisca's testimony is particularly significant, is that it suggests the overlooked, but vital role of the *imagination* in historical interpretations. In regard to oral history, Portelli (1991) explains that "wrong" testimonies—or those which are unaligned with the documented, factual details of an event—are nevertheless historically valuable because the myths which tellers create "allow us to recognize the interests of the tellers, and the dreams and desires beneath them" (p. 2). In a similar fashion, while the fictional Magawisca did not literally exist, the testimony which Sedgwick constructs through her is vitally important because it embodies *possibilities* concerning the perspectives and experiences of those who have been suppressed from the historical record. It is also important to note that Sedgwick's disclaimer to the literal / factual correctness in her representation of Magawisca gives credence to the idea that she is not presumptuously speaking *for* indigenous peoples, but rather, is concerned with activating her readers' *imagination*s so that their acceptance of a distorted one-sided testimony is disrupted. Indeed, acceptance of early colonists' documents as factual, objective—or of encompassing the whole picture—is perhaps a greater fiction than Sedgwick's carefully constructed Pequot characters, for to do so both distorts and obstructs the historical quest to understand our "whole process of becoming."

#### Imagining Testimonials: the Roles of Love and Fear

At the center of Sedgwick's witness is the implication that our historical perceptions are either entrenched in fear or inspired by love. When referring to an

imagination inspired by love, I am speaking of a variety that is unselfish and that believes and hopes for the best in people and in situations. Due to Sedgwick's religious background<sup>6</sup> and the fact that the New Testament connects faith and hope with a type of love called "agape," it is likely that it is agape love which she depicts as the creative force behind her protagonists's capacity for compassionate life perceptions.

While characters called "Hope" and "Faith" are present in the novel, a name symbolic of love (sometimes called "charity") is not. However, love *is* consistently named as the inspiration behind a positive imagination—an imagination that results in sympathetic and creative actions. As it is used in the New Testament, agape love involves deliberate choices, is interested in the welfare of all, but "can be known only from the actions it prompts" (Vine, p. 703). More simply put, it is similar to what George Eliot describes as "sympathy."

In contrast to agape love, fear moves the human imagination towards cowardly thoughts and actions. Rather than strengthening people to believe the best of others, it promote disconnection and undue self-protection. It is the force of fear that Sedgwick detects within the popular historical interpretations of her day. Taking early Puritan and national historians to task for their claims of objectivity, Sedgwick implies the role that a fearful imagination played in constructing the majority of national histories, when she juxtaposes Magawisca's version of "The Great Swamp Fight" with established historical accounts.

Trapped in a forest enclosure, and with their few surviving warriors defeated, Magawisca's mother counsels her children to show the English that "even the weak

ones of our tribe are strong in soul” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 52). To Everell, Magawisca relates,

The English had penetrated the forest-screen, and were already on the little rising-ground where we had been entrenched. Death was dealt freely. None resisted—not a movement was made—not a voice lifted—not a sound escaped, save the wailings of the dying children (p. 53).

Directly following Magawisca’s account she comments to her readers that the “magnitude” and the “terror this resolute tribe inspired” were “somewhat heightened to the *imaginations* of the English...” (p. 53).

Clearly motivated by fearful imaginations, early historians like William Hubbard depict the Pequod women, children, and few remaining young men as “sullen dogs” who “sit still to be shot or cut into pieces” out of “self-willedness and madness” (1814, as cited in Sedgwick, 1987, p. 54). As an explanation for the early colonists’ unlikely perception, Sedgwick explains that traditional depictions of the Pequods’ “courage” were “distorted into ferocity” (1987, p. 54).

In contrast to such fearful perceptions is Everell’s response, which is inspired by sympathy, or love. Seeking to guide her reader towards re-imagining this “familiar” war as Everell has, Sedgwick deftly weaves his witness with William Hubbard’s chilling description of The Great Swamp Fight in his A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England. Sedgwick’s narrator notes,

Everell’s *imagination*, touched by the *wand of feeling*,<sup>7</sup> presented a very different picture of those defenceless families of savages, pent in the recesses of their native forests, and there exterminated...by those “...that in the morning entering into the swamp saw several heaps of them [the Pequod’s] sitting close together, upon whom they discharged their pieces, laden with ten or twelve

pistol bullets at a time, putting the muzzles of their pieces under the boughs within yards of them” (1814, as cited in Sedgwick, 1987, p. 54).

By intermingling Everell’s response with a conventional historical narrative, Sedgwick changes the texture of the Pequod War for her readers, for her stylistic choice reflects the relationship of a witness to testimony. By literally ushering Everell’s sympathetic imagination inside the words of Hubbard’s account, Sedgwick works to transform the meaning of this conventional militaristic narrative for her readers.

Key to Everell’s willingness to allow a witness’s testimony to change his historical perceptions is his habit of directing his imagination in the way of love and sympathy. After receiving Magawisca’s testimony, Everell’s perspective of a masculinist type of virtue, or the American liberty myth, is reshaped. While earlier in the novel he eagerly accepts Digby’s—or the conventional version—of the Pequod War, he now attributes heroic virtue to the resistant Pequods. Sedgwick notes that “Everell did not fail to express to Magawisca, with all the eloquence of a heated *imagination*, his sympathy and admiration for her heroic and suffering people” (1987, p. 54). Thus, Sedgwick not only subverts national narratives, but she also demonstrates the influence of a “heated imagination” on human—and therefore historical—perspectives that are inspired by love (p. 54).

That Sedgwick selects Everell, her New Adam, as the main witness to Magawisca’s testimony is telling. Indeed, as Sedgwick’s ideal American man, Everell’s imaginative ability “to depict a very different picture” of his culture’s treatment of indigenous peoples works as a cue to readers that when “touched by the wand of

feeling,” their own historical perceptions can also be transformed (1987, p. 54).

Sedgwick hints at her confidence in imagination’s power to sensitize her readers towards alternative spaces and possibilities within conventional histories in the closing lines of her Preface. With her usual mix of modesty and rhetorical skill, Sedgwick makes a seemingly innocent patriotic comment. She states,

These intended volumes are so far from being intended as a substitute for genuine history, that the ambition of the writer would be fully gratified if, by this work, any of our young country men should be stimulated to investigate the early history of their native land (1987, p. 6).

Having witnessed the reality of silenced historical voices, Sedgwick implies that it is her hope that her readers will also employ a sympathetic imagination towards historical research.

Recognizing the widespread belief in the possibility of historical objectivity, Sedgwick further explores imagination’s influence on human perspective by juxtaposing Digby’s fearful account of the Pequod War with Hope’s creative and sympathetic “Bethel Chronicles.” In particular, Sedgwick demonstrates why a simple recognition of imagination’s role in historical constructs is of vital importance, for due to Hope’s awareness of imagination’s power, she is able to use it creatively. In contrast, Digby, who trusts completely in rational thought—in the accuracy and objectivity of his senses—suffers from both a deformed moral sense and dangerous illusions.

At the core of what Philip Gould (1994) terms Digby’s “male histiography” is the character’s belief in his own objectivity and complete reliance on the accuracy of his senses. Digby’s naivete concerning the influence of a fearful imagination on historical

narratives becomes evident through a scene in which both the elderly servant and Everell guard the Fletcher home against a possible enemy attack. Eager to boast of his exploits in the Pequod War, Digby begins to recount his experiences as the two men watch. Sedgwick writes, they both “wore away the time till the *imagination*s of both relater and listener were at that pitch, when every shadow is embodied, and every passing sound bears a voice to the quickened sense” (1987, p. 43). In fact, Digby becomes so excited that he mistakes the return of Magawisca from the forest for the invasion of Pequod warriors. Upon becoming convinced of his mistake, he laments “Could I have been so deceived?” (Gould, 1994, p. 647). Through Digby’s arrogant and near-disastrous error, Sedgwick demonstrates that even supposedly “objective” eye witness accounts are informed by imagination, which in the case of Digby is ruled by fear.

However, an even more disturbing trait of Digby’s representative “status quo historiography” is his “deformed moral sense,” which is informed by self-preservation and fear (Gould, 1994, p. 647). When in the course of their conversation, Everell mentions the bravery of Magawisca’s older brother, Samoset, who was decapitated in the war, Digby is flippant. To Everell’s comment, he remarks, “Yes, he did, poor dog!—and he was afterwards cruelly cut off; and it is this that makes me think they will take some terrible revenge for his death” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 43). Although wary of the possible consequences of what Sedgwick later calls “the Massacre at Mystic,” Digby is clearly not morally troubled by a young man’s unjust and horrible death.

However, as Hope Leslie writes in her own historical record, “love can paint as well as fear” (p. 96). Well aware of the role that imagination plays in her construct, Hope has the freedom to use it creatively and the openness to maintain a loving, or sympathetic perception. Through the letters she writes to Everell while he is in England—which she humorously christens “the Bethel Chronicles”—Hope constructs a history of the Puritan community. Hope’s awareness of the role that imagination plays in her historical construct is first evident when she writes to Everell (who is living in England for five years) of his family’s birthday celebration in his honor. Hope records that though there is “no form, palpable to common eyes, yet to second sight, *imagination* produces from her shadowy regions the form of our dear Everell” (p. 96).

Interestingly, Hope’s sympathetic imagination enables her to paint an almost exact likeness of the Bethel community’s most important historical event, Everell’s final rescue from the Pequods. After escaping from Mononotto due to Magawisca’s sacrificial aid, Everell is discovered by Digby, who finds the young man lying under a tree in the forest. With great excitement, Digby explains

There Jennett, you are always on the look-out for witchcraft. I wonder what you call that? It is a perfect picture of the place I found Mr. Everell, as that fellow there, in the frieze jacket is of me; and anybody would know that...To be sure, Mr. Everell does not look so pale and famished as he did when I first saw him sleeping under the birch tree: as I live she put his name there just as he had carved it. *Well, it will be a nice kind of history for Mr. Everell’s children, when we, and the forest too, are laid low* (p. 96).

Much like her title character, Sedgwick’s sympathetic imagination enabled her to construct a meaningful and creative piece of history in order to aid both herself and Hope Leslie’s readers in their process of becoming.



Just as Sedgwick's imagination enabled her to reshape her cultural present, so too did it inspire her to re-think the past in order to inform the present and the future. In spite of her hopeful expectations for the new republic, Sedgwick's human frailty is evident within her alternative history. The promise that a sympathetic or loving imagination holds out to American individuals and their communities is not without a shadow. Digby almost prophetically states that the forest will be "laid low" and Sedgwick's Pequod characters must also "disappear" to the Western forests. Hope Leslie (1827), then, is a type of historical cautionary tale, in that while it offers hope, it also illustrates the seemingly unredeemable losses that can occur when an individual's or a nation's imagination is devoid of love.

#### End Notes

1. In this context I use "sacred" to imply that deeply embedded traditions, social perceptions, and storylines are often revered as unchangeable "reality."
2. The Puritans' attack on the Pequods at Fort Mystic, Connecticut occurred on May 26, 1637. Magawisca's testimony also describes the Great Swamp Fight which took place on July 13 (Foster, 1974, p. 75).
3. In her autobiography, Sedgwick jokes with her great niece Alice concerning the influx of Irish Catholics or what Puritan leaders would have dubbed the emissaries of the "anti-christ" into the Stockbridge area. Thus, she implies that from the point of view of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Puritans, both Native American cultures and Catholicism were a deviation from "civilized" or godly living.
4. In Magnalia Christi Americana Cotton Mather describes indigenous peoples as "barbarous Indians" whose "whole religion was the most explicit sort of devil-worship" (Foster, 1974, p. 75).
5. Hope Leslie negotiates an escape from some drunken sailors on the night that a ship containing the Fletcher's servant Jennet, the novel's villain Sir Philip Gardiner, and Gardiner's unfortunate victim Rosa explodes. While Sedgwick's characters are fictional, early records mention that the night a ship mysteriously exploded in Boston Harbor, several of its crew had been ashore carousing. Not only does she borrow these details

for her novel, but she also uses them to explain Sir Philip's disappearance from the colony. Sir Christopher Gardiner, the historical figure who inspires Sedgwick's villain, vanished mysteriously from the colony without explanation.

6. Considering Sedgwick's propensity for biblical allusions, it is reasonable to accept that she would construct an allegory within her novel based on the New Testament triad of faith, hope, and love. Her first book, A New England Tale (1821), was originally written as a Unitarian tract after her conversion from Calvinism.

7. From the context in which the "wand of feeling" is used, it is clear that Sedgwick is speaking of compassion or sympathy—feelings which are not necessarily self-absorbed or based upon specific personal affinities. Also, her use of the word "wand" implies the possibility of transformation, or of seeing an aspect of life anew.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REDEEMING CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

“White man, thou shalt not die; or I will die with thee!”  
(from James Nelson Barker’s The Indian Princess, or LaBelle Sauvage (1803).

Readers do not have to look far to spot mythic images such as the fierce savage, the noble savage, Pocahontas, and the medicine healer within Sedgwick’s characterizations of her Pequod and Narragansett characters in Hope Leslie (1827). As Ann Urhy Abrams (1999) explains, “creative minds often embellished simple tales” for the purpose of creating legends and traditions that could fill “the cultural and historical void created by separation from the English motherland” (pp. 5 & 6). Indeed, long before the early nineteenth century such iconic roles were deeply entrenched upon the American psyche. Therefore, in order to gently open spaces for her readership to recognize the humanity of indigenous peoples, Sedgwick incorporates culturally familiar (and therefore seemingly acceptable) myths within Hope Leslie (1827) for the purpose of reshaping them.

Most white nineteenth-century Americans viewed themselves as “civilized” and indigenous peoples as “savages.” Therefore, Sedgwick’s determination to engage a widespread readership while at the same time disrupting their closely held myths says much about her nonlinear life journey. Not only did her selection of politically unpopular subject matter add complexity to her writing project, but of course the social limitations related to her gender did as well. Watching her work within and through prevalent stereotypes— obstacles which blocked both her own and others’ journeys—speaks of the

great pains that even a woman who was socially prominent had to take in order to have a credible voice. However, for the remainder of this chapter, I will step away from a direct conversation about Sedgwick's journey in order to focus on the development and the powerful presence of these myths in the culture from which she emerged.

Within literature and popular culture indigenous men were represented as "savages" who were either "noble" or "fierce," while the stereotypical roles assigned to Native American women were more complicated and much more precarious. Therefore, for the majority of this chapter I will examine development of and the problems associated with what Rayna Green (1990) terms the "Pocahontas Perplex," which is one of the oldest and most powerful mythic images of indigenous women. In addition, I will discuss some of the problems involved in Sedgwick's general strategy to elicit her readers' empathy for her characters. However, before doing so I will touch on the ways in which the stereotypes of noble and fierce savages were perpetuated and how Sedgwick incorporated this mythic thinking into Hope Leslie (1827).

#### Redeeming the Fierce Savage

At the time that Sedgwick wrote Hope Leslie (1827), her home region of Stockbridge was full of oral stories from just one generation past in which inhabitants had grown up dreading the possibility of a Mohawk attack (Foster, 1974, p. 78). When her mother Pamela Dwight was a baby her family had fled to Great Barrington upon hearing the warning cry "The Indians are coming!" Although it was a false alarm, "the feeling of terror that swept through the town when the first cry was heard was long remembered" (Foster, 1974, p. 78). What is important about this story is that it

illustrates what Sedgwick was confronting when she sought to reshape her readers' view of indigenous peoples as "fierce savages." In the case of the Stockbridge community—as with the majority of white Americans—it was not a family story of an actual massacre that informed their perspective of "Indians," but accounts of their ancestors' mental anguish. More powerful than negative interactions—whether direct or remembered—were her readers' phantoms of fear and dread. Therefore, one of Sedgwick's most powerful strategies for asking her readers to re-think their stereotypes of the "fierce savage" was to bring them into relationship with indigenous characters who possess added complexity.

Of all her Pequod characters, it is Magawisca's chieftain father, Mononotto, who is the most directly representative of a foreboding "savage." Reminiscent of early captivity tales, the "savage" Mononotto stands back as an innocent baby is torn from his mother's arms and dashed onto rocks.<sup>1</sup> However, Sedgwick is careful to avoid depicting the chieftain's behavior as a "savage's" natural state. Through Magawisca's testimony to Everell, she provides a psychological explanation or rationale for Mononotto's cruel vengeance. In Magawisca's retelling of the Pequod War, Mononotto—who has consistently shown friendship towards the English—returns from a council meeting to find his people almost totally destroyed. Magawisca explains,

Every eye was turned with suspicion and hatred on my father. *He* had been the friend of the English; *he* had counselled peace and alliance with them; *he* had protected their traders; delivered the captives taken from them, and restored them to their people... From that moment my father was a changed man. He neither spoke nor looked at his wife, or children; but placing himself at the band of the young men he shouted his war-cry, and then silently pursued the enemy (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 50).

Thus, Sedgwick suggests that Mononotto's cruelty has been shaped by the greater savagery he has received at the hands of the colonists.

Sedgwick further constructs her rationale for Mononotto's behavior by demonstrating that a good deal of his cruelty stems from his strict adherence to abstract law. Indeed, Christopher Castiglia (1989) explains that Mononotto's sense of justice is reminiscent of "the male world of the Old Testament," which is emphasized by his use of Old Testament language (p. 11). Acting as Mononotto's foil, "the imaginative spirit of Magawisca" builds an argument for sparing the life of Everell Fletcher by placing him within the context of friendship. In other words, based on her friendship with the Fletcher family, she insists that Mononotto should exercise grace and allow Everell to go free. Mononotto's moral vision, however, is based on justice alone.<sup>2</sup> In the limited light of abstract law and rationality, Magawisca's contextualized pleas mean very little. The English took the life of Mononotto's teenaged son Samoset, so it is "rational" to demand that they now pay in kind. Reflecting the Old Testament law which demands an "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth," Mononotto declares "he dies by my hand...a life for a life" (Castiglia, 1989, p. 11).

In order to emphasize that it is his adherence to the abstract law which overpowers Mononotto's humanitarian impulses rather than his "natural savagery," Sedgwick frequently hints at the painful struggle he endures in order to remain loyal to a law of justice. For instance, during the attack on the Fletcher family, Mononotto is moved when Martha's baby clasps his leg. Sedgwick writes,

Mononotto's heart melted within him; he stooped to raise the sweet suppliant, when one of the Mohawks fiercely seized him, tossed him wildly around his head, and dashed him on the doorstone. But the silent prayer—perhaps the celestial inspiration of the innocent creature, was not lost. “We have had blood enough,” cried Mononotto, “you have well avenged me, brothers” (1987, p. 65).

Sedgwick also emphasizes the destructive consequences of a rigid adherence to abstract law, when after the attack on the Fletcher family, Magawisca cries, “My father—my father—where is my father's look, and voice?—Mononotto has found his daughter, but I have not found my father” (p. 74). The narrator explains that “Mononotto felt her reproach—his features relaxed, and he laid his hand on her head” (p. 74). Moments later his impulse towards mercy is squelched when the law of justice returns to his memory. “I tell thee, that as Samoset died, that boy shall die” (p. 75).

Interestingly, Mononotto's mindset is aligned with that of the equally rigid Puritans, for a similar adherence to abstract law is evident when the community sentences the innocent Nelema to death for witchcraft. The *context* in which Nelema practiced her healing arts is regarded as unimportant during her trial, for when Hope Leslie attempts to explain Nelema's situation the court magistrate informs her that her words are “but the whistle of a bird” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 109).<sup>3</sup> Thus, Sedgwick subverts any tendency on the part of her readers to assume that a lack of mercy is peculiar to “savages” such as Mononotto.

### Naming Noble Savages

While images of the “fierce savage” are on one side of the mythic coin, images of the “noble savage” are on the other. Although the work of Roy Harvey Pearce (1953) is rather limited, in that he appears to accept the dichotomy of “savage” and

“civilized,” his explanation of why Anglo and European colonists promoted the myth of the noble savage is helpful. Echoing James Fenimore Cooper’s spatial vision, Pearce (1953) points to a western European intellectual tradition--primitivism--which maintained the belief that “simpler societies were somehow happier” than complex “civilized” communities (p. 136). Having judged indigenous peoples as more “primitive,” and therefore less corrupt, there were those who perceived “Indians” as “noble savages who theoretically embodied all that good *men* should be”(Pearce, 1953, p. 136). Pearce’s theory is worth mentioning because within the totality of his explanation, he recognizes that the seventeenth and eighteenth-century primitivists who initiated this myth were not interested in actual cultures or complex individuals, but in their own underlying dreams of uncorrupted goodness.

In Hope Leslie (1827), Sedgwick incorporates the stereotype of nobility for the young Pequod woman Magawisca. Around the time of the Revolutionary War “Miss Liberty” portraits--depicting indigenous women with slender frames and flowing “Romanesque” robes--began to appear in the United States (Green, 1990, p. 16). Reflecting this culturally familiar image, Magawisca—who is draped in cloth of a royal purple—is introduced to Sedgwick’s readers as a graceful and modest young woman whose movements “expressed a consciousness of high birth” (1987, p. 23). Further hinting at Magawisca’s “natural” nobility, Sedgwick informs her readers that the young woman’s “leggings” were “similar to those worn in Queen Elizabeth’s court” (p. 23). She concludes Magawisca’s physical description with the comment that “this daughter of a chieftain...had an air of wild and fantastic grace, that harmonized well with the



noble demeanor and peculiar beauty of the young savage” (p. 23). Thus, Sedgwick quickly establishes for her readers that Magawisca is a “noble” or “good savage”—a category that is important to maintain if her nineteenth-century audience is to trust one of her most important New American Eve characters. For while white Americans bought into a dichotomy of noble or fierce in terms of *male* indigenous characters, by the nineteenth-century “Indian” *women* were viewed either as noble princesses or promiscuous squaws. Since the feminine ideal was “piety, purity, and submission,” Sedgwick’s challenge was to reshape accepted stereotypes while still managing to keep Magawisca on the “noble” side of the dichotomy. However, in order to piece together the ways in which Sedgwick creatively maintained this precarious balance, it is important to have a working knowledge of how the noble princess or Pocahontas stereotype developed in the United States.

#### Historicizing the “Pocahontas Perplex”

Although it is common fare in history books, it is uncertain if the legendary Pocahontas, or Matoaka, truly did rescue an endangered Captain John Smith. As Ann Abrams (1999) notes, Smith’s own Generall Historie (1624) was “the fountainhead for *all* data about Pocahontas,” for it is the only colonial document in which the adventurous rescue story is recorded (p. 16). Events surrounding Smith’s writing of the colony’s history add to the story’s lack of credibility. Two years before his manuscript was published, the majority of Jamestown’s British population were destroyed when Pocahontas’s Uncle, Openchancanough, led an attack against the settlement in retaliation for the constant encroachment of the English into the Powhatan’s territory

(Abrams, 1999, p. 31).<sup>4</sup> The blame for this catastrophe was directed towards the group that was financially responsible for the Jamestown venture, London's Virginia Company, which was near bankruptcy (Abrams, 1999, p. 16). In an attempt to disassociate himself from the company, John Smith gathered together documents and anecdotes which Abrams (1999) explains "exonerated his decisions, emphasized his skills in running the colony, and underscored his expert dealings with indigenous peoples" (p. 16). Describing himself as a "fearless fighter" who had excelled as a leader in Hungary and Turkey, he claimed that his main obstacles to "dealing firmly but fairly with the 'Salvages'" were the incompetent leaders sent by the Virginia Company who interfered with his peace negotiations and wrangled for his authority (Abrams, 1999, p. 17).

In terms of the United States' historical journey it is perhaps more important to discern *why* Smith's narrative—and in particular his most famous Pocahontas tale—was embraced and perpetuated as "truth," rather than if the events he described actually occurred. Abrams (1999) explains that one reason John Smith's autobiography was so widely accepted was the fact that he offered the British public the first eye witness account of what life was like in an English colony. While previous explorers had described Virginia's topography and vegetation, Smith offered dramatic stories (such as his rescue by Pocahontas) which featured human interaction (p. 16).

However, it is likely that the Pocahontas myth maintains its psychological power because it offers mainstream Americans a very Anglo-centric genesis story. Indeed, Abrams (1999) explains that there are two basic—and quite competitive—legends to

which many Americans refer in order to mark the United States' beginnings (p. 3). The oldest legend, that of Pocahontas, explains that at twelve years old the "noble princess" prevented her father Powhatan from executing Captain John Smith, which "preserved the North American continent for future English colonization" (p. 3). The second Anglo-centric story purports that the United States' genesis should be traced back to the Pilgrims' arrival at Plymouth. As Abrams (1999) notes, it was in Massachusetts that church elders—along with the soldier Miles Standish—"wrote a compact on board the Mayflower that presumably established the fundamentals of the future U. S. Constitution" (p. 4). Because post-colonial Americans were a somewhat "disparate people," it was important for them to develop and maintain regional histories, traditions, and legends which comforted them with a sense of roots and of continuity. Later, the Pocahontas myth in particular—along with its "noble princess" stereotype— would be promoted to advance political and social agendas.

However, as Rayna Green (1990) points out, Pocahontas existed in European literature and mindsets long before John Smith penned his account of his rescue by the "Indian Princess" in the Generall Historie of Virginie (1624) (p. 15). Green (1990) notes that as early as 1575, artists and writers searching for a symbol to represent the frightening yet beautiful New World, began to construct exotic images of an Indian Princess or Queen (p. 16). Crediting E. M. Fleming's (1967/ 1968) thorough explication of Pocahontas images, Green (1990) notes that "the misnamed Indian was the native dweller who fit conveniently into the various traditional folkloric, philosophical, and literary patterns characteristic of European thought at the time" (p. 16).

As time elapsed, Europeans and Americans altered the noble princess image to reflect their current psychological and social needs. For instance, between the years of 1575 until around 1765, she was what Green (1990) describes as “a Mother-Goddess figure—full-bodied, powerful, nurturing but dangerous—embodying the opulence and peril of the New World” (p. 16). The queen-like figure was often bare breasted and cloaked in feathers and animal skins. Frequently portrayed as riding an armadillo, the militant heroine placed her foot on the bodies of the animals or human enemies that she had slain (Green, 1990, p. 16). As Americans moved towards independence, the powerful queen became a more slender princess. Sometimes referred to as “Miss Liberty,” she wore Roman robes and had Caucasian features. Although she was armed with a spear, Abrams (1999) notes that she also tended to carry “a peace pipe, a flag, or the starred and striped shield of Colonial America” (p. 17). Referring to the work of Philip Yancey, Green (1999) explains that by the time the colonies severed ties with England Pocahontas was not only revered as “our first aristocrat” but as “our first saint,” as well (p. 15).

Determined to produce literature, art, and theatre that was centered on uniquely American, rather than English topics, images of Pocahontas continued to gain popularity with American artists in Sedgwick’s early republic.<sup>5</sup> Bounded by gender related restrictions, one reason that Sedgwick chose to incorporate the noble princess into Hope Leslie (1827) was so that she could construct a socially acceptable background from which to discuss what was popularly known as “the Indian question” (Abrams, 1999, p. 110). In spite of (or perhaps through) her use of stereotypes, Sedgwick’s novel

challenged the morality of the United States' removal of eastern Indian nations from their ancestral lands (Kelley, 1987, xxviii). Three years later, George Washington's step grandson (and adopted heir), George Washington Parke Custis, wrote the popular play Pocahontas, or The Settlers of Virginia (1830) (Abrams, 1999, p. 109). Abrams (1999) describes the tone of Custis's play in the following manner:

The playwright characterized Smith as the idealized Andrew Jackson...who accused the Indians of bringing about their own eradication because they refused to give up their administrative and cultural autonomy. With repeated insinuations that the Indians' downfall was self-imposed, Custis endowed the rescue scene with the fatalism of a Greek drama, but in this case it was tribal, rather than individual, hubris that brought down the wrath of the gods and destruction of a people (p. 111).

While both Sedgwick's novel and Custis's play adopt the popular nineteenth-century theme of the "vanishing Indian," Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) does not blame the eastern removal of indigenous peoples on "Indian stubbornness" or pride, but on the limited vision and poor choices of English colonizers. Her incorporation of the noble princess motif, then, is for the purpose of drawing her readers towards an appreciation of indigenous cultures and a realization of their humanity.

#### Pocahontas vs. the Squaw

However, engaging readers with the culturally familiar Pocahontas stereotype while at the same time expanding their perceptions of indigenous peoples' humanity demanded that Sedgwick walk a fine line, for as Green (1990) notes, many white Americans suspected that "on the other side of each noble princess, lurked a crude and promiscuous squaw" (p. 19). In terms of literature and popular culture, Abrams (1999) traces the emergence of this fear to the work of a Frenchman, the Marquis de

Chastellux, who visited the Virginia plantation of a Pocahontas–Rolfe descendant in the 1780's. Upon returning home, he wrote Travels in North-America in the Years 1780–81–82 (1787), which included his own version of the Pocahontas and Captain John Smith legend. The same year that his work was published in France (1787), the widely read Columbian Magazine printed a translation of Chastellux's version for American readers. In John Smith's account, Pocahontas saves his life by placing her head on top of his head "to stave off a fatal blow" (Abrams, 1999, p. 56). However, Abram (1999) notes that in Chastellux's story Pocahontas "threw herself upon his body [and] clasped him in her arms" (p. 56). When the two meet again years later in England, Chastellux writes that John Smith must resist a sexual encounter with the now married heroine, for he refused to return "her caresses with equal warmth" and "he dared not to treat her with the same familiarity as in Jamestown" (Abrams, 1999, p. 56).

After the publication of Chastellux's more "romantic" version of the old legend, depicting Pocahontas as a "forest siren" became a popular form of entertainment in both Europe and the United States (Abrams, 1999, p. 56). In 1803, the British John Davis's Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America became one of the most popular versions of the Pocahontas story. As Abrams (1999) explains, Davis "converted the Pocahontas epic into an erotic romp," in which "Powhatan's wives fought 'in convulsive throes' to be bedded by Captain John Smith" (p. 57).<sup>6</sup>

Soon after, James Nelson Baker's The Indian Princess, or La Belle Sauvage (1808) was dramatized on the American stage. Although much less erotic than Davis's version, Baker's play depicted Pocahontas as sensual and passionate (Abrams, 1999, p.

59). His play also re-inscribed the already prevalent squaw and “good and “bad” Indian stereotypes, in that the majority of his Indian characters were “lusty, childlike... weak, and corruptible” (p. 59). As the exceptions to this depiction, Pocahontas and her brother were highlighted as being different than the others only because they “expressed a desire to become members of English society” (Abrams, 1999, p. 59). Significantly, the Native American characters in Barker’s play became the prototypes not only for future dramatizations of the Pocahontas legend, but also for other forms of fiction produced in the early nineteenth century. Thus, while literature reflecting The Indian Princess, or La Belle Sauvage (1808) still promoted the idea that Pocahontas was a “noble Indian,” it also reflected the cultural shift which emerged from Chastellux’s first sensationalized version of the legend. The “princess” had moved uncomfortably close to her sister, the “squaw’s,” taint of sensuality and eroticism.

#### Eluding the Squaw

Indigenous women (as well as writers such as Sedgwick) were forced to negotiate a type of cultural double bind. Like all “good Indians,” it was the noble princess’s function to “rescue and help white men” (Green, 1990, p. 17). As a beautiful and exotic princess she was the object of white men’s lust; however, as an image “tied to abstract virtue,” she was required to remain the untouchable goddess or princess (Green, 1990, p. 17). As Green (1990) explains,

In the case of a squaw, the presence of overt and realized sexuality converts the image from positive to negative. White men cannot share sex with a princess, but once they do so with a real Indian woman, she cannot follow the required love-and-rescue pattern. She does what white men want for lust and money (p. 19).

While numerous ballads and legends communicated that it was acceptable for an “Indian princess” to sacrifice her life for white men or to commit suicide due to unrequited love, in such relationships the Pocahontas icon had to “keep her exotic distance” in order “to remain on the positive side of the image” (Green, 1990, p. 18).

Therefore, while Sedgwick employed the Pocahontas stereotype in her characterization of Magawisca to ensure that her readers could accept her Native American protagonist as a “good” character, she also had to be sure that their fears of a “promiscuous squaw” were laid to rest. Aware of the tension some of her readers might feel regarding the close relationship between Magawisca and the Fletchers’ adolescent son Everell, Sedgwick works to abate their fears by letting them know that the teenagers’ attachment has not escaped parental notice. While Everell’s father William is away on business, his mother Martha writes to her husband, explaining that “innocent and safe as the intercourse of these children now is, it is for thee to decide whether it be not most wise to remove the maiden from our dwelling” (p. 33). In contrast, nothing is said when Faith Leslie shows a similar preference for Magawisca’s child-like brother Oneco, whom she eventually marries. Ironically, although the almost super-human Magawisca is Sedgwick’s most remarkable heroine, she could not allow her to be the surviving New Eve character who marries the New Adam. To do so, would raise suspicions and weaken Magawisca’s voice in the novel.

Further complicating Sedgwick’s attempts to raise her readers’ “consciousness” regarding the displacement of indigenous peoples, while at the same time disrupting their adherence to destructive stereotypes, was the fact that in many ways the



Pocahontas vs. Squaw myth reflects a larger cultural dichotomy which labels all women as either virgins or vixens. In an era which attributed the qualities of “piety, purity, and submission” to the “ideal” woman, transgressing the boundaries of either a “virgin” or a “princess” meant a certain loss of credibility. Therefore, Sedgwick does not reshape this more general cultural myth, but rather, she incorporates it into her historical novel as a type of cautionary tale. In contrast to the “noble” Magawisca—and her English literary double Hope—is the “fallen” character Rosa. While Sedgwick uses Magawisca’s and Hope’s kindness towards Rosa to emphasize the importance of providing sisterly support for “unfortunate” women, she also illustrates that Rosa’s choice to transgress the boundaries of a “good girl” was ruinous.

In addition to challenging the morality of Jacksonian politics regarding “the Indian question,” Sedgwick was also concerned with equipping young women to construct safe places for themselves within mainstream American culture. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the widespread nineteenth-century fear that naive young women were at risk of being seduced—followed by the possibility of pregnancy and abandonment. Less than a decade after Hope Leslie’s (1827) publication—between 1834 and the early 1850’s—16, 500 American women subscribed to the Female Moral Reform Society’s national paper, The Advocate of Moral Reform, which consistently emphasized “the lascivious and predatory nature of the American male” and issued “a call for the creation of a national union of women” in order to abolish the sexual and moral double standards afforded to men (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985, p. 115). While Sedgwick obviously did not view all men as “predatory,” she did see her character

Rosa's predicament as something for which girls should be forewarned. Due to the lack of support within American culture(s) for young women, it is possible that she feared the consequences of moving naive readers away from the prescribed "good girl" role too quickly.

Indeed, it was Sedgwick's fairly consistent strategy to embrace and then reshape and expand women's limiting social roles. By playing into the cultural expectation that women act as "dispensers of morality," Sedgwick and others maintained and increased women's authority over domestic and community matters. Indeed, women's organizations such as the Female Moral Reform Society drew their credibility from the idea that women were morally superior to men and therefore qualified to influence cultural matters (Smith-Rosenburg, 1985, p. 115).

Therefore, by depicting Magawisca as a "noble Indian," Sedgwick sought to disrupt readers' distrust of indigenous women by equating her "noble princess" character with white women who fit the socially promising "good girl" role. While it is probable that some within Sedgwick's nineteenth-century audience would have felt *pity* towards the sufferings of a well-developed (and "noble") "Indian" character, it was Sedgwick's desire to move her readership out of *pity* towards the more substantial emotional investment of *compassion*. In Fruits of Sorrow, Elizabeth Spelman (1997) describes the attitude of the one that *pities* in the following manner:

While I in principle could be the subject of the kind of experience you are having, insofar as I pity you, I wouldn't be caught dead, in fact, having such an experience... I'm not *that* kind of person... (p. 120).

Spelman (1997) explains that in order for Sedgwick's white readers to experience compassion for her indigenous characters—a type of compassion that seeks possibilities for change—they must embrace the notion that they too could be subjects of suffering and express a belief in their “shared humanity” (p. 120).

One of the most important strategies for moving her readers towards compassion is by situating Magawisca as her title character, Hope's, direct double. Indeed, when the two meet at their mother's grave sites, Hope reflects, “mysteriously have our destinies been interwoven. Our mothers brought from a far distance to rest together here—their children connected by indissoluble bonds!” (p. 192). Cut from the same spiritual cloth, both young women possess characteristics akin to the virtue of republican motherhood: piety, purity, and compassion (Gould, 1994). Therefore, by associating Hope and Magawisca as literary doubles, Sedgwick not only situates the two characters as moral equals, but she also suggests that Magawisca possesses values and traits which are perhaps similar to those that her readers admire.

Further seeking to blur the dichotomy between the “noble savage” and her readers, Sedgwick employs a trope common to sentimental novels, in which “true women,” or sisters of the heart exchange tokens.<sup>7</sup> At their final parting, Hope presents Magawisca with a gold locket containing a lock of Everell's hair and “a small miniature of him painted” (p. 333). Having reaffirmed Magawisca's status as Hope's double, Sedgwick ends the scene by employing the wide spread “vanishing Indian” theme, for Magawisca hops into a boat and “in a few brief moments disappeared for ever from their sight” (p. 334). Hope, Everell, and even the more militant Digby, experience a

keen sense of loss, a feeling that in the sight of Sedgwick's nineteenth-century readers could only be engendered by the absence of a "good" or "true" woman.

Eluding the label of a "squaw" takes a different turn, however, in the case of the "Indian mother" Nelema. Old and withered, Nelema does not fit the role of an exotic, yet "sacrosanct" noble princess. Unfortunately, the only way for Sedgwick to elicit her readers' compassion towards an older Indian woman was to convince them that the character possessed a good deal of wisdom. Therefore, Sedgwick worked to keep Nelema on the "noble" side of the mythic coin by depicting the elderly woman as a "medicine healer." Green (1990) explains that the general notion of Indians as healers dominated the nineteenth-century patent medicine business (p. 18). Although such shows often depicted the woman healer as a "helpmate" to her "doctor" husband, an alternative Indian healer sometimes emerged in the form of an elderly and mysterious "witch healer."

According to Green (1990), the portrayal of indigenous women as healers causes them to share "in the Caucasian or European females' reputation for potential evil" (p. 19). Significantly, this association expands and intermingles Sedgwick's reshaping of the medicine healer with her re-envisioning of the biblical Eve's curses. Unlike traditional interpretations of the Genesis story which depict a woman as being solely responsible for suffering and sickness in the world, Sedgwick portrays a woman as a minister of healing. It is Nelema—the last survivor of her Narangunsett nation—who is the sole person capable of administering healing to the dying Mr. Craddock. It is also important to note that Sedgwick arranges for *Mr. Craddock* and not a woman to

succumb to the snake's bite. Therefore, Sedgwick employs Nelema's success at bringing aid to the dying Mr. Craddock, not only to reshape the myth that women who act as medicine healers are evil witches, but to also subvert the notion that women left unattended are responsible for destructive curses. Thus, Sedgwick's reshaping of the mythic role of the medicine healer speaks of her own life journey as well, for if she is to fulfill her desire to act as a cultural leader, then it is important to establish that women are just as likely to be trustworthy as men. Therefore, Hope's testimony not only encourages sympathy for Nelema's plight, but it also reshapes negative mythic interpretations for *all* women. As Hope reiterates for the court, "I said, 'It was better to mistake in blessing than in cursing, and that Nelema was as innocent as myself'" (p. 109).

#### Empathetic Disruptions

While successful on many levels, Sedgwick's strategies to elicit acceptance and sympathy for her indigenous women protagonists also carried with them certain problems. Spelman (1997) notes that a risk involved with empathetic responses is that one sees "so much of oneself in another's experience that one completely obscures the existence of that other subject..." (p. 118). Referring to the work of Toni Morrison, Spelman (1997) further explains that empathetic relationships are often impositional, in that they are "non-dialogic" or "one-sided" rather than "interpersonal," and "there is always the danger that the person claiming to participate in the experience of another is simply a ventriloquist" (p. 130). While Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) is indeed a platform for her own political and social voice, at least in part, she manages to deviate

from the role of a ventriloquist by attempting to incorporate some of the multiple voices that had informed her journey. In the case of the Pequods –as with other nations that had been destroyed or removed from their ancestral lands–the voices that Sedgwick constructed were “possibilities” based on the faint whispers that she had strained to hear in the early colonists’ records and through her study of the Pequods’ customs. Writing Hope Leslie (1827), then, provided Sedgwick with a means to respond empathetically, an opportunity to enter into an imaginative dialogue.

Spelman (1997) implies that attitudes of equality do not necessarily accompany empathy. The likelihood of a non-impositional type of empathy increases when relationships (living or literary) involve a dialogic aspect as well as a definite sense of distinction between the readers and the characters for whom they feel compassion. Interestingly, Sedgwick models this type of empathy in the scene where Magawisca and Hope visit their mothers’ graves, for both young women express mutual appreciation of cultural differences and engage in a compassionate dialogue. Although designed to increase Magawisca’s favor with her nineteenth-century readers by assuring them that the two are “sisters of the soul” and “true women,” the scene is also one of the most successful at emphasizing Magawisca’s humanity and in reshaping the noble princess stereotype. One way that Sedgwick accomplishes this by depicting Magawisca as the first of the two to have a *healthy* empathetic response. Hope is only able to move away from some of her ethnocentrism and to express a non-impositional type of empathy because of Magawisca’s patience and compassion in the face of her English friend’s cultural limitations.

During this scene Magawisca informs Hope that her sister Faith has married her brother Oneco. Sedgwick uses Hope's undisguised horror at the revelation that her sister has "married an Indian" as an opportunity for instructive dialogue. Significantly, Magawisca's indignant response, "Think ye that your blood will be corrupted by mingling with this [Indian] stream?"— is characteristic of neither "noble" perfection nor a "fierce savage." It is the expected human, rather than stereotypical response. Indeed, details and responses that mark Magawisca as a personality that is separate from the Pocahontas stereotype are woven throughout the scene. So too is her growth in empathy.

Initially, Magawisca agreed to meet and to help Hope see her sister because of Hope's kindness in rescuing the unjustly imprisoned Nelema. However, as dialogue unfolds between the two young women, Magawisca develops empathy for the English girl's plight. Standing on the common ground of their mothers' graves, Magawisca's anger at Hope's ethnocentrism abates when she understands that Hope's negative response is due in part to a concern that her deceased mother's wishes will not be fulfilled in Faith's life. Having lost her own mother, this is something that Magawisca can understand. As Spelman (1997) notes, the beginnings of empathy emerge in dialogue when a participant's attitude communicates that she sees the other person "not only as the subject of suffering but [her] susceptibility to it as something [they] share" (p. 130).

However, unlike the empathy which lacks a sense of equality and an acceptance of the other person as a distinctly different human being, Magawisca's response emerges

in the midst of recognized differences. When Hope later expresses relief that while living with the Pequods Faith “at least” received instruction from a Catholic priest, Magawisca replies “Perhaps ye are right...there may be those that need other lights; but to me, the Great Spirit is visible in the life-creating sun...I feel Him in these ever-living, ever-wakeful thoughts...” (Sedgwick, 1987, p. 189). Gently turning the tables on her nineteenth-century audience’s expectations, it is *Magawisca* who alters *Hope*’s spiritual and cultural perceptions and values. While both young women eventually express a non-impositional type of empathy, Hope is able to do so only because of Magawisca’s patience and compassion.

Although in many ways Sedgwick seeks her readers’ approval of Magawisca by depicting her as a “true woman,” she also makes it clear that Magawisca’s “goodness” is not due to a desire to adopt English values. In contrast, writers such as Davis (1803), Barker (1808), and Custis (1830) emphasized that Native Americans were capable of being “noble” (as opposed to crude, promiscuous, or fiercely savage) only if they desired to become like the British. Unlike Sedgwick’s portrayal of the spiritually sensitive Magawisca, Custis’s Pocahontas proclaims that she never knew that God was merciful until the British informed her (Abrams, 1999, p. 112). In addition, she argues with her father in behalf of the British because she recognizes the superiority of this foreign culture which she has adopted as her own. Sedgwick’s characterization of Magawisca clearly challenges widespread stereotypes of “Indian nobility.” Thus, Sedgwick gives her audience the clear hint that not only are their world perceptions not the “norm,” but that they will benefit from listening to the voices of indigenous peoples.



Sedgwick's strategic reshaping of indigenous stereotypes—particularly in regard to women—were indeed complex. Perhaps her great efforts should not be surprising, for they reflect the journeys of numerous other women before her. As Gerda Lerner (1990) notes, the majority of any intellectual endeavor undertaken by women involves “counteract[ing] the pervasive patriarchal assumptions of their inferiority and incompleteness as human beings” (p. 11). Therefore, considering the lack of humanity attributed to indigenous peoples, Sedgwick's attempts to reshape white Americans' deeply held stereotypes were doubly challenging. Initially cloaked in what her nineteenth-century readership could accept—Pocahontas, the medicine woman, and noble and fierce savages—Sedgwick worked from within her culture, rather than against it, to bring change.

As twenty-first century outsiders, it is sometimes initially difficult to hear the wisdom and subversion in Sedgwick's voice. In my own journey I am just beginning to learn to listen. Hopefully, I will learn to listen as wholeheartedly as she did when she poured over the records of her ancestors for lost voices—voices that disrupted the din of stereotypes.

#### End Notes

1. The History of Maria Kittle (1779) by Ann Eliza Schuyler Bleecker is the earliest known frontier romance. It also contains a scene (although much more graphic) in which a baby is dashed against rocks (Friebert, L. & White, B., eds. 1994, p. 116).
2. Sedgwick's insights into the gender informed ways in which morality is approached reflect the research of Carol Gilligan, Trudy Hanmer, and Nona Lyons (1990). Based on their work with adolescent girls at the Emma Willard School, Lyons (1990) explains that there appear to be “two distinct orientations to morality: a morality of justice and a morality of care. Each moral voice implies or articulates a particular conception of

relationships—relationships of equality and fairness, or relationships of responsiveness and interdependence” (p. 32). Throughout Hope Leslie (1827) Sedgwick highlights these two different approaches for the purpose of demonstrating that justice which is separated from specific contexts and mercy is not justice, and rationality which is separated from a free imagination is not solid thought. Interestingly, E.D.E.N. Southworth would take up a similar theme in the mid-nineteenth century in her melodrama The Hidden Hand (1859), when an unjust case is built against Travis—one of her male protagonists—by his commanding officer. Because the “facts” are presented to a military court according to the law without respect for their context, Travis comes close to receiving the death penalty. It is only when a member of the jury mixes mercy with justice and refuses to act on decontextualized rational thought alone, that the innocent Travis escapes the death penalty.

3. The court magistrate’s dismissal of Hope’s testimony is of course gender related as well. However, while it is reasonable to expect that a middle aged man’s testimony would have been heard, such was their adherence to the laws against witchcraft (which amounted to any healing practices that they did not understand) that it is unlikely that they would have been able to see Nelema’s actions from a different perspective.

4. Although Pocahontas’s father is widely known as Powhatan, his actual name was Wahunsonacock (Abrams, 1999, p. 19). Powhatan was the name of the Algonquian-speaking nation of which he was the chief. Due to the fact that the British called him Powhatan, that is the name that is used for him in current historical sources. Likewise, Pocahontas was a “nickname” and Matoaka was the original name of our legendary heroine (p. 16). After she was christened, married John Rolfe, and traveled to England, she was often called “Lady Rebecca” by artists and historians who wished to distract attention away from the fact that several old tidewater plantation families were descendants of a “mixed race” union.

5. Although two hundred years had passed since Virginia’s Pocahontas supposedly rescued Captain John Smith and the English pilgrims set foot on Massachusetts’ Plymouth rock, artists and writers continued to promote their own regional American genesis stories. For instance, as late as 1840 Mary Webster—who was a poet and a Pocahontas-Rolfe descendant—wrote a long epic poem entitled Pocahontas: A Legend (Abrams, 1999, p. 125). In one section of her poem she emphasizes that *a decade before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth* Pocahontas’ baptism and subsequent marriage to John Rolfe acted as a “connecting link” between the Old World and America (Abrams, 1999, p. 126). What is interesting about this continual regional rivalry in terms of Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827) is that by incorporating the Pocahontas legend into her own Massachusetts based novel, Sedgwick presented her readers with an American genesis tale that was a synthesis of the two stories. Although loyal to her native Massachusetts, her interest was in influencing the whole of United States culture. Issues

involving the displacement of indigenous peoples and opportunities for women are her greatest concern in the novel.

6. Although Davis's erotic account was extremely popular, critics abhorred it for what they viewed as its "pedantry, vulgarity, affection, and conceit" (Abrams, 1999, p. 58). Due to its popular success, Davis quickly released an almost identical sequel called The First Settlers of Virginia, in which he asked that the critics' comments be printed in the Preface (Abrams, 1999, p. 58). Apparently, he viewed their disapproval of his novel's eroticism as free advertising.

7. Although the idea of true womanhood did not fully gain power until a bit later in the century, it was in many ways an expansion of the already well-accepted republican motherhood. Key to many American women's life choices was their commitment to sisterhood and their practice of religious piety. In general, women were seen as natural "dispensers of morality," who were best suited to stay within the "woman's sphere" of the home in order to keep it pure for "toil worn" men who daily battled the capitalistic, public world.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### UNWINDING THE JOURNEY: A FEW CONCLUSIVE THREADS

"It is our inward journey that leads us through time—forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling" (Eudora Welty, 1984).

The literal meaning of the word "clue" or "clew" (1601) is "a ball formed by winding thread or yarn" (Carver, 1991, p. 112). In Carver's (1991) A History of English In Its Own Words, he explains that this meaning stems from the Greek legend of Theseus, in which the protagonist is guided out of the Minotaur's Labyrinth by a ball of thread held by Ariadne (p. 113). Somehow this image does not surprise me. Winding my way through Hope Leslie (1827) in search of clues to her journey, I have frequently felt as if Sedgwick has been playing the role of Ariadne, and I have been working my way along Theseus's winding path.<sup>1</sup> Gathering clues regarding Sedgwick's life journey, it is clear that her identity construction follows patterns quite different from those associated with the rugged individualist or the traditional archetypal hero. In addition, Sedgwick's portrayal of the self differs greatly from the identity theories of most present-day scholars, in that she acknowledges that humans are spiritual beings. Significantly, her inclusion of spirituality implies that there is much about the self—and how that self comes to be and to know—that is mysterious. By acknowledging that human beings are spiritual, Sedgwick calls into question the widespread assumption that aspects of self—such as knowledge construction and identity formation—can be adequately measured, predicted, or understood. Spirituality is mysterious; aspects are unknowable. Hence,

Sedgwick's identity theory as it is depicted in Hope Leslie (1827) is of vital importance to education, for it challenges the illusions of control to which we hold so tightly.<sup>2</sup>

Another significant aspect of Sedgwick's identity theory is the role that gender plays in her construction and sense of self. Indeed, weaving backward, forwards, stopping, and at times moving from side-to-side, Sedgwick's spiraling quest differs from conventional American "norms," due to the gender related obstacles she must negotiate, transcend, and reshape along the way. Unlike the traditional Adamic hero, Sedgwick's construction of self is further complicated by the fact that her life experiences and inner thoughts are not aligned with what her culture deems as valuable and "real." Therefore, it was Sedgwick's hope to reshape the outer world in ways that would align with her inner thoughts and desires, and she was inspired to revisit and reinterpret powerfully influential cultural "myths" such as the Genesis story of Adam and Eve and early national narratives.

Indeed, Sedgwick's awareness of the role of gender in identity formation also informs her emphasis on a self that is both relational and individualistic. Following in a type of woman's tradition, Sedgwick writes out her life in her later autobiography (1851) as she lives it in relationship to others. However, in Hope Leslie (1827), while she celebrates the importance of relationality, Sedgwick attaches equal importance to the role of individual choice in each life journey. Differing once again from the male-oriented "norm" of rugged individualism, Sedgwick demonstrates the importance of incorporating and honoring not only a measure of individualism, but also the relational strengths often attributed to women within each emerging self.

Throughout this chapter, I will discuss how the clues that I have gleaned from my analysis of Sedgwick's life and novel have influenced the ways in which I have come to rethink the self. After briefly touching on Sedgwick's depiction of a socially constructed self, I will then seek to explain the ways in which she incorporates notions of a soul and spirit into her theory of identity. Following this section, I will focus on Sedgwick's depiction of identity as gendered, along with some of the ways in which she transcended gender related restrictions. In addition, I will explore Sedgwick's emphasis on the possibility of constructing a self that is both relational and individualistic. After noting the need of adolescent girls (as well as of boys) for alternative cultural and literary images of identity construction, I will turn to some of the more specific ways that Sedgwick's life and work can inform our journeys.

#### Sedgwick's Socially Constructed Self

Long before more current scholars began to do so, Sedgwick envisioned identity as something that was socially constructed (Kelley, 1987, xxix). As biographer Mary Kelley (1987) notes, Sedgwick "emphasiz(ed) that environment, not inherent disparities shaped character" (xxix). Deeming it necessary to explain to her readers why her title character Hope is "superior to the prejudices of the age," Sedgwick asserts that it is not Hope's "natural sagacity," but environmental influences which have formed her identity (p. 126). In regard to Hope, Sedgwick narrates:

Those persons she most loved, and with whom she had lived from her infancy, were of variant religious sympathies. Her father had belonged to the established church, and though he had much of the gay spirit that characterized the cavaliers of the day; he was serious and exact in his observance of the rites of the church. She had often been her mother's companion at the proscribed 'meeting,' and

witnessed the fervor with which she joined in the worship of a persecuted and suffering people. Early impressions sometimes form molds for subsequent opinions; and when at a more reflecting age, Hope heard her Aunt Grafton rail with natural good sense, and with the freedom, if not the point, of mother wit, at some of the peculiarities of the Puritans, she was led to doubt their infallibility; and permitted her mind to expand like the bird that spreads his wings and soars beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith (p. 123).

Much like the French post-structuralist Michel Serres's (1997) more current image of a Harlequin's coat,<sup>3</sup> Sedgwick presents her character Hope as one who is "dressed in the road map of [her] travels." In other words, Hope's identity is formed (and continues to form) through her engagement with the diverse relationships and situations within her journey. Integrated with her own experiences of reflection, it is the influence of varied and dynamic environments which feed the ways in which Hope comes to be and to know.

#### Multiplicity in Oneness and Spirituality

However, while Sedgwick emphasizes the role of the environment in identity formation, her writing also implies that while our selves are indeed socially constructed, they are also spiritual. Emerging from fragmented pieces and layers, Hope's life "road map" is also a unified whole. It is an example of multiplicity in oneness, which is perhaps the most useful phrase that I have found for describing what I view as Sedgwick's theory of identity—or her perception of the self as fragmented yet whole, constant yet dynamic, socially constructed yet spiritually directed.

Through her New Eve characters' habits of prayer, her well-researched portrayal of the Pequod's pantheism, and her depiction of some of her Puritan characters' sincere faith, Sedgwick emphasizes—like so many other nineteenth-century

women—that we are spiritual beings. Sedgwick provides her readers with a glimpse of how her own spiritual views relate to identity in her attempt to describe her title character’s appearance. Indeed, through her description of Hope’s eyes, Sedgwick constructs a symbolic image that suggests both “multiplicity in oneness” and presence of a spirit that moves within and through the self. The narrator explains:

It is vain to attempt to describe a face, whose material beauty, though that beauty may be faultless, is but a medium for the irradiations of the soul. For the curious, we would, if we could, set down the color of our heroine’s eyes; but alas! it was undefinable, and appeared gray, blue, hazel, or black, as the outward light touched them, or as they kindled by the light of her feelings (p. 122).

Fractured yet whole, Sedgwick’s seemingly contradictory image suggests the possibility of incorporating post-structuralist perspectives of multiple and dynamic identities with the notion of a soul. Much like Serres’s (1997) image of the Harlequin’s coat or his portrayal of identity as “a road map of travels,” Sedgwick’s dynamic and multiple image implies that the many strands of self are interconnected. Much like a Celtic knot, they are separated yet connected.

Further insight into Sedgwick’s identity theory as it is depicted in Hope Leslie (1827), can be gleaned from the writings of other women who negotiated their ideas about the formation of the self in a similar fashion. For example, in her work Interior Castles (1979) the fifteenth-century mystic Theresa of Avila’s depiction of human identity also emerged from an acceptance of multiplicity in oneness that was inclusive of spirituality. From within what she refers to as the heart’s “seven dwelling places,” components of the spirit are in continual flux as they interact with socially constructed “surface selves” as well as with outer worlds. As Teresa writes, “in each of these



(dwelling places) are many others, below and above, and to the sides, with lovely gardens and fountains and labyrinths..." (Payne, 1979, p. 21). Teresa's depiction of the soul does not give itself to neat packaging or simple explanations. While offering a type of "unity," in that it is inclusive of the multiple and ever changing strands of the self, it is also mysterious and in many ways beyond definition. As Michele Serres (1997) notes, "the complex cannot be observed: neither seen nor known. Extant then, enormous and sometimes troubling, difficult to comprehend, intertwined..."(p. 21). The soul is contradictory. As DeWaal (1997) comments, "life does not add up"(ii). While the soul or self is contradictory, sometimes unknowable, and filled with irreconcilable tensions, it is also mysteriously held together by a dynamic and pervasive spirit. It is the paradox of "a hidden wholeness," a picture of multiplicity in oneness.

#### A Gendered Self: Evidence of Spirituality

Although it is difficult to detect or explain spiritual aspects of self, the issue of gender as it pertains to the writings of women mystics provides additional insights. For example, women writers such as Julian of Norwich not only emerged from societies that did not regard women's perceptions as "normal" (since they frequently deviated from those of men), but that further restricted women's attempts at self expression through the imposition of rigid gender expectations and masculinist writing formats. As Leigh Gilmore (1994) explains, critical ideologies have traditionally emerged from the assumption that the subject and object of a life narrative are to be "a man regarding another man," who is reflecting upon *himself*, as opposed to autobiographical patterns which entertain the possibility of women's participation in self representation (p. 2).

However, having formed their identities in the midst of gender-related restrictions, many women mystics transcended these limitations by emphasizing the *integration* of their social , physical, and spiritual selves within their various life narratives. Indeed, Julian of Norwich's autobiographical manuscript focuses entirely on May 8, 1373—the day that she experienced her own wounded body as being “conflated” with that of Christ's (Gilmore, 1994, p. 140). In short, Julian's depiction of identity construction makes it impossible to view her identity as separate from her spiritual experiences. What is especially significant about this intersection of multiple selves is that the spirit is free from gender restraints. As Leigh Gilmore (1994) explains, mystical writing “stands outside” of gender due to the New Testament understanding that “in Christ there is no male or female” (p. 146). Gilmore (1994) further argues that within Julian's manuscripts “gender is denaturalized, for it no longer attaches persons to their acts according to gender expectations” (p. 146). Thus, Julian's writings imply that while the self is shaped by social influences (and therefore subject to gender restrictions), it is not wholly under their power, for as spiritual beings there is much that is mysterious about and within our knowing and becoming.

#### Negotiating A Different Journey

Reading the lives of Sedgwick and the mystics, it is abundantly clear that gender expectations and restrictions play a crucial role in determining the ways in which women construct their identities. Feminist scholars such as Arnis Pratt (1981) are quick to point out that women's journeys deviate from conventional linear “norms” due to the fact that their inherited life paths are strewn with numerous gender related obstacles.

For example, as a nineteenth-century woman Sedgwick's quest consistently necessitated that she create spaces for herself within her culture's narrative. Indeed, it was Sedgwick's hope to reshape the patriarchal outer world in ways that would align with her inner thoughts and desires. Therefore, she was inspired to revisit early national histories not for the purpose of constructing another chronological metanarrative, but because it was her hope to make cultural (and therefore personal) connections between her own life perspectives and the experiences of others. Moving "forward or back" through time, her "spiraling" journey was both blocked and initiated by a lack of alignment between her inner self and the patriarchal world around her. In addition, nineteenth-century gender restrictions also meant that she was obligated to construct a socially acceptable rationale to justify her desire to influence American culture. Unfortunately, such gender related expectations placed great and often unjust demands on her energy and intellect—a life condition experienced by numerous women across the centuries.<sup>4</sup>

#### Re-envisioning Stories of Status

Although Sedgwick's father encouraged her to read and her brothers provided emotional and intellectual support for her writing career she—like all women—lacked the encouragement and guidance of women's history. As Lerner (1993) comments,

Women who did not know that others like them had made intellectual contributions to knowledge and to creative thought were overwhelmed by the sense of their own inferiority or, conversely, the sense of the dangers of their daring to be different...Every thinking woman had to argue with the "great man" in her head, instead of being strengthened and encouraged by her foremothers (p. 12).

That Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) encapsulates many of her own arguments with the "great man" or men in her head is telling. As a woman surrounded by social restrictions, her journey necessitated that she construct new spaces and reshape patriarchal tenets if she was to have a voice. Lacking a foundation of women's stories, Sedgwick was obligated to construct her own foundation by recovering lost historical voices in the course of writing out her own story.

However, in terms of popular narratives, the marginalization of women's stories was not the only gender related obstacle that influenced women's identity formation. Indeed, Sedgwick not only re-imagined historical narratives in order to enjoy the guidance of past women's stories, but she also reshaped culturally pervasive narratives for the purpose of altering deeply ingrained gender restrictions against women. In particular, she was determined to reinterpret the ancient story of Adam and Eve. Like so many women across the centuries, Sedgwick resisted traditional interpretations which place humanity's fall solely on Eve's shoulders. Following in what appears to be a type of woman's tradition, she understood the power of this narrative to exclude women from full participation and leadership within their communities.

Although Sedgwick's re-interpretation of an American Adam and Eve is humorous in light of her competition with James Fenimore Cooper, it is also the most subversive aspect of her American vision. Embracing the story so often used to support exclusive and misogynistic practices, Sedgwick reshaped conventional interpretations to form a narrative that spoke of the early republic's desperate need not only for the multiple voices of women, but also for the stories of indigenous peoples.

When viewed from the context of her day, Sedgwick's reshaping of this influential biblical story is quite significant. Indeed, the numerous re-interpretations of the Genesis narrative across the centuries not only act as definite indicators regarding points when women were desperate for cultural change, but their appearance at such times also provides insight regarding the ways in which gender roles were (and "are") socially constructed. Although colonial and American women had never been regarded as equal to men, the nineteenth century was especially pivotal in terms of developing ideologies which would determine gender roles. For instance, James Fenimore Cooper supports his American vision of exclusive white male leadership in The Last of the Mohicans (1826) by implying that the displacement of indigenous peoples and the silencing of women was divinely sanctioned.

Although such sentiments gained more power later in the century, American cultural visions that supported the oppression of women and Native Americans were clearly already quite pervasive. William Pinar (in press) notes that two popular ideologies which undergirded nineteenth-century perspectives similar to those of Cooper's were manifest destiny and domesticity. He explains,

The discourse of manifest destiny declared a divine basis for the expansion of democracy, individualism, capitalism, and American 'civilization' across the continent. The discourse of domesticity reassured a restless migrant people that there were 'natural' even divinely decreed differences between men and women. These perceived differences legitimated a variety of activist and public roles for men. Women should remain within the private domain of domesticity, wherein piety and purity could be cultivated, safely separate from the tumultuous, predatory, manly world of war, politics, and the marketplace (p. 2).

Thus, Sedgwick's decision to reinterpret this powerfully influential cultural myth by depicting two of her New Eve characters as indigenous women, and by portraying her female protagonists as strong and interdependent, enabled her to construct an American genesis story that subtly yet effectively turned the tables on the patriarchy. Revisiting the past for the purpose of re-imagining the future, Sedgwick's allusions to a New Eve and a New Adam held out alternative possibilities for her emerging country's definition of gender roles and inclusion of non-white leadership. Clearly, the energy Sedgwick exhausted in terms of re-imagining, re-interpreting, and re-shaping gender related (and race related) obstacles, suggests a life journey that was walked out in a fashion quite different from culturally prescribed, linear "norms."

#### Relationality and Individuality: Negotiating New Possibilities of Self

Sedgwick's life journey not only differs from conventional "norms" on the basis of its nonlinear, or circuitous patterns, but also because she acknowledges the importance of relationality in regard to identity formation. Once again, this difference stems from Sedgwick's gendered experiences, for while men were enculturated in a "masculine ethos" of individualism and militarism, early nineteenth-century women were encouraged towards the Christian benevolence of "republican motherhood." In contrast to individualistic aggression, the values of republican motherhood were those of compassion, kindness, and nurture. Therefore, it is easy to comprehend why women such as Sedgwick would have understood and emphasized the importance of connection in regard to the identity formation of self and community. Indeed, biographer Mary

Kelley (1993) notes that in Sedgwick's 1851 autobiography she "presented herself as entirely interwoven with others" (p. 40).

However, in spite of Sedgwick's relationally oriented self-representation, within Hope Leslie (1827) she not only stresses the importance of interconnection, but she also acknowledges the necessity of maintaining a degree of individualism. Perhaps the importance of maintaining this creative balance is best illustrated through Sedgwick's characterization of Martha Fletcher. Certainly, Martha is representative of the virtues associated with republican motherhood; for when under her sole care, her home is like "a garden in the wilderness," what Castiglia (1989) describes as "a peaceful, equitable domestic world devoid of harsh and hierarchizing law..." (p. 4).

Having constructed her sense of self in relation to others, Martha possesses the necessary gifts to build a community from which both she and others can gain strength.

However, Martha's relational self unfortunately lacks the balance of any sense of individualism. For example, although she experiences a feeling of foreboding upon observing the visual warning sign that Nelema drops in front of her home, Martha refuses to listen to her own intuitive voice. As one who sees herself only as she is in relation to others, Martha is unwilling to make the decision to move her domestic circle to safety apart from her absent husband's advice. Although Sedgwick clearly respects the relational way that she and many other women have come to know, she is also careful to illustrate the disastrous results that occur when women do not understand the necessity of listening to their own voices. In the fictional Martha's case, her failure to heed her own voice results in stagnation, and both she and a number of her children are

utterly destroyed in a Pequod attack. Thus, Sedgwick demonstrates the necessity of constructing a self that is both relational and individualistic, for to shy away from this ongoing, often precarious balancing act is to risk widespread repercussions.

Echoing from the past, Sedgwick's images of identity speak to our current needs. As Carol Gilligan (1990) notes, "at the edge of adolescence, 11-and-12-years-old girls observe where and when women speak, and when they remain silent" (p. 25). I am cognizant of a type of spiraling paradox in which my own ability to act as an individual increases in its importance due to my interconnection with those around me. Ironically, I do not exert my "individualism" because I perceive it as the of strength, but because in a culture that equates individuation with maturity, I attempt an individualistic course when I choose to value the relational qualities often attributed to women.

Differing from a cultural bias which regards stories of separation as the *only* norm, the joint and separate research of Carol Gilligan, Nona Lyons, Trudy Hanmer (1990); Carol Gilligan, Lyn Mikal Brown (1992); and Carol Gilligan (1998) indicates that girls tend to develop within and through relationships rather than through separation.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Gilligan (1990) explains that, "women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies" (p. 17). Having constructed an identity that is defined within the context of its relationship to others, much like Martha Fletcher, many adolescent girls and women "naturally" excel in the areas of mercy, relationship, and nurture. Unfortunately, however, such important strengths are undervalued within American mainstream culture. As Miller (1976) explains, "when the (cultural) focus on



individuation and individual achievement extends into adulthood and maturity is equated with personal autonomy, concern with relationships appears as a weakness of women rather than as human strength (as cited in Gilligan, 1990, p. 17). Thus, it is clear that both young women and young men would benefit dramatically from incorporating relational and individualistic perceptions of strength within their ever changing identities. However, creatively negotiating life contradictions—such as the need for a self that is both relational and individualistic—is not something that currently receives a great degree of cultural support. In short, it is a precarious business, and not something that is easily aligned with “American” (or Western) ways of thinking. It is for this reason, then, that Sedgwick’s willingness to embrace life contradictions, to reshape false binaries, and to re-imagine the past offers teachers and students valuable insights regarding their perceptions of self and life possibilities. It is perhaps the most valuable gift that she holds out to her readers. Therefore, if we are to benefit from her journey, it is important to explore the ways in which she negotiated contradictions and ambiguity through her attempts to imagine “third eye” possibilities.

#### Lessons From Sedgwick: Contradictions, the Imagination and a “Third Eye”

Spiraling back to observe how Sedgwick negotiated life’s contradictions, I am convinced that the clues I gather hold immediate relevance not only to my own journey, but to the lives of others as well. Enculturated towards simple dichotomies and definite answers, we pass on similar expectations; therefore, it is unfortunately quite a “natural” response to resist narratives that threaten the simplicity of our life understandings. As Benedictine and Celtic scholar Esther DeWaal (1997) explains,

Life does not add up: the longer I live the more that is brought home to me. It was not the message that I received from my parents or one that was taught to me by any educational establishment as I was growing up. Nevertheless I think, looking back, that it is probable one of the most useful lessons that one can hear. It is curiously liberating to realize that I shall go on until the day of my death trying to hold differing things together and that the task (for which I need all the help I can get) must be to do it creatively, so that the tensions may become life-giving (ii).

DeWaal (1997) further suggests that learning to live with contradictions is of vital importance in a world where “people seem to be building barricades to maintain their positions, unwilling to listen to other points of view...” (iii). While neither DeWaal (1997) nor Sedgwick (1827) pretend that formulas or methods exist for learning how to balance contradictions, they do suggest the possibility that false binaries and rigid obstacles often hold the potential to be creatively reshaped.

Key to Sedgwick's ability to transcend various obstacles and to make spaces for both herself and others within their country's story—past and present—was her awareness of the imagination. Both she and Arozina Perkins were able to envision new possibilities—to construct a “third eye” in the midst of culturally given false dichotomies—through imagination's power. Echoing Catharine Sedgwick's views almost one hundred and seventy years before him, Dwayne Huebner (1996) notes that the imagination is the source of our “knowing, acting, valuing, and freedom” (p. 437). Emerging from the mind, heart, and spirit, it is the imagination that enabled women such as Sedgwick and Perkins to negotiate the limitations of false dichotomies by constructing “third eye” perceptions of their lives.

Rather than being blocked by patriarchal limitations and false dichotomies, Sedgwick embraced complexity in order to construct “third” or new ways of seeing. Significantly, her adult negotiations of rigid cultural and family dichotomies indicates that she possessed important insights into the contradictions and complexities of her relational self. For example, rather than hold complete disdain for the elitism of her parents and grandparents, Sedgwick learned to honor what was good about their views—such as their sacrificial adherence to principles of patriotism and justice—even as she moved away from their Federalist values in order to promote a more egalitarian perspective. In a similar fashion she managed to appreciate the courage and long suffering of her once persecuted Puritan ancestors, while at the same time criticizing their subsequent persecution and oppression of women and indigenous peoples. In short, Sedgwick worked to accept diverse facets of herself—such as her ancestry—which if viewed according to a reductionist binary of “bad and good,” would have required that she either protect herself in a state of defensiveness and denial or that she maintain a type of self-hate due to the unalignment between herself and her parents and ancestors.

Of course, Sedgwick’s awareness of and willingness to embrace complexity did not always yield results that were “neat” or immediate, nor were her social views without contradiction. For example, in her attempts to build a rationale for her involvement in the supposedly public realm of culture, Sedgwick reverted to her parents’ elitism when she wrote to her friend Louisa Minot that “in this country we must do everything for the majority” (Kelley, 1987, xv). Thus, Sedgwick’s faltering

demonstrates the reality that learning to negotiate life's contradictions is a continual, ongoing process—an imperfect yet valuable process of knowing that is always in flux and revision.

### Lessons From Sedgwick: Imagination, Love, and Social Democracy

Indeed, Sedgwick appeared to be comfortable with an unfinished—and therefore “foreign” state of “otherness” within her constantly changing self. Sedgwick’s ability to accept or to love “the other” within her own inner self, provides insight into her abilities to love the multiple “others” who comprised her growing country. Specifically, Sedgwick’s work with love and the imagination indirectly lends support to a type of democracy that is quite different from what is currently promoted within our schools. Within Hope Leslie (1827) Sedgwick emphasizes the power of agape love to influence the ways in which the imagination molds our life perspectives. Her ability to love “the other” within both her inner self and the outside world involved a definite choice. Unlike a love based solely on affection, romance, or desire (Eros), Sedgwick’s practice of agape love could be detected only through positive actions and was concerned with the general welfare of society, rather than merely exhibiting interest in the specific well-being of those for whom she had affection.

Due to the power of an imagination inspired by agape love, Sedgwick’s cultural vision makes room for many voices. For instance, it is Everell’s loving imagination that provides the sense of acceptance and security that he needs to listen to Magawisca’s very different historical perspective.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the social environment that Sedgwick imagines for her readers does not depict *one* New Eve, but at least three diverse

American prototypes. Equally important is Sedgwick's implication that positive change requires the loving actions and imaginative work of a community, rather than attention to the sole rights of the individual. As Christopher Castiglia (1989) notes, "no adventure is resolved in Hope Leslie by a single heroic agent; rather, the two heroines' stories collectively depict the dangers women face and the means they use to prevail" (p. 176).

Sedgwick's cultural vision—which she depicts as emerging from the complementary work of love and the imagination—foreshadows the ways in which women such as Jane Addams would interpret democracy in the later part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Indeed, Jane Addams's depiction of democracy makes it possible to see some of the ways in which Sedgwick's emphasis on an imagination inspired by an active agape love can bring about changes within both the classroom and the wider community. In her work with testimonial literature, Eppert (in press) implies that in order for students to openly face the ideological discomfort and ambiguity elicited by Holocaust testimony, they must be supported by an atmosphere that encourages both "love" and "talk." On a wider scale, Addams imagined similar conditions to be necessary for a dynamic and socially just democratic society, for in order to create a democracy, we must learn ways in which to love and to talk with "the other." Referring to Addams's understanding of the need for multiple voices within a democracy, Munro (1999) shares a statement from Addams's Democracy and Ethics.

She quotes:

We know instinctively that if we grow contemptuous of our fellows, and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics (p. 79).

Interestingly, like Sedgwick, Addams also implies that the imagination is an integral part of peoples' abilities to act in love and to share discourse. She writes, "we have learned as common knowledge that much of the insensibility and hardness of the world is due to the lack of *imagination* which prevents a realization of the experiences of other people" (Munro, 1999, p. 88). Similar to Sedgwick's depiction of agape in Hope Leslie, Addams's portrayal of the types of "love" and "talk" necessary for a social democracy reflect her active concern for community well-being, rather than a sole concern for individual rights.

Munro (1999) explains that rather than emphasize individual rights, Addams re-imagined social change as "belonging to the community as a whole" (p. 81). Further describing her vision, she notes that "for Addams, democracy was dependent on social interaction in which diversity was seen as a strength" (p. 82). Reflecting Sedgwick's inclusion of diverse American Eves, Addams also emphasized the democratic necessity of many voices, and she viewed a sole emphasis on "universal" or "natural rights" as something that "obscured" our "duties to humanity" (p. 82). Thus, Addams's social democracy embodies Sedgwick's implication that transformation can occur when our imaginations are inspired by an active love. Looking past pervasive views of American society, Addams imagined a "third" or alternative way that if critiqued according to

Sedgwick's depiction of agape, was indeed inspired by love. Her emphasis on social responsibility and the inclusion of diverse voices reflects an active type of love that moves people outside of their "selves," yet at the same time offers security through its emphasis on inclusion.

### Contributions, Conclusions, and Celtic Alternatives

Clues gathered from Addams's democratic vision and Sedgwick's life and writings comprise an image of journey that is far different from Adamic and archetypal stories of extreme individualism and final endings. Indeed, it is her image of identity formation that is perhaps Sedgwick's greatest gift to education. Through my analysis of Sedgwick's life and most popular novel, it is evident that Sedgwick's theory of identity formation, her "praxis, is open-ended, works to creatively balance contradictions, recognizes multiplicity in oneness, emphasizes love and the imagination, and is interdependent with "the other." Throughout my analysis of her life and Hope Leslie (1827), I wondered what might happen if within our social studies and literature classrooms, young women and young men were given the opportunity to interact with narratives and ways of knowing that reflected Sedgwick's experiences of identity? Significantly, her "alternative" journey is not without precedent.

Gleaned from historical records, literary constructs, and the oral tradition, the life journeys of ancient Celtic Christians, often called *peregrinatio*, differ from the linear quests traditionally promoted within Western literature. Once called "peregrinati," pilgrims such as these are known to have traveled across Europe for approximately 500 years during the early Middle Ages over a geographic range that stretched from Italy to

Iceland (DeWaal, 1997, p. 39). Although peregrini were most frequently men, there is also evidence that women embarked on such journeys as well. Difficult to translate fully and succinctly, peregrinatio's basic meaning is best understood through the retelling of a traditional Irish tale. Historian and theologian Esther DeWaal (1997) explains,

Its essence is caught in the ninth-century story of three Irishmen drifting over the sea from Ireland for seven days, in coracle without oars, coming ashore in Cornwall and then being brought to the court of King Alfred. When he asked them where they had come from and where they were going they answered that they 'stole away because we wanted for the love of God to be on pilgrimage, we cared not where.' (p. 2).

Echoing aspects of Sedgwick's own negotiations of the self, these peregrinati were willing to deal with "otherness," with unknown lands and people, as well as with unknown aspects of their selves. Rather than journey towards a final product, their acknowledgment of a spiritual self equips them to embrace ambiguity, to allow the processes of their lives to unfold. By implication, it is an active agape love (similar to Sedgwick's) which also inspires their imaginations, for the three travelers were able to envision a "third" or alternative way for themselves.

Much like Sedgwick, the peregrini were also willing to recognize and to embrace life's uncertainty and contradictions. DeWaal (1997) explains that the co-existence of multiplicity and oneness was "a natural part" of how early Celtic Christians understood identity and coming to know. She notes that this was probably due to the fact that they were "deeply Trinitarian" and were "without any philosophical struggle about how that [was] to be expressed intellectually" (p. 38). Prayers spoken as they went about their daily work were based on the Trinity, and analogies drawn from nature



and daily experiences reveal how such a concept was easily integrated into their daily lives (DeWaal, 1997, p. 39).

Peregrinatio, then, is an image of journey which views the self as fractured, yet whole—an entity that is always in process. In addition, paradoxes and instances of “multiplicity within oneness” are not denied, but perceived as “natural” life conditions. Much like Sedgwick’s journey as it is depicted in Hope Leslie, peregrinatio moves towards a balanced life perspective, for while travelers exercise a degree of individualism in order to maintain their journeys, they are ever aware of human interconnection and their responsibilities towards community.

In reflecting upon peregrinatio, an old yet “new” life narrative, I am reminded of feminist scholars in the seventies who suspected that there must be archetypal stories that depicted women as competent and courageous rather than always in need of rescue by much more capable male heroes. Awakened to new possibilities, folklorists such as Suzanne Barchers and Ethel Phelps Johnson compiled thick anthologies of traditional stories that featured women protagonists who are shrewd, strong, and positive. What might happen, if awakened to the need for stories that celebrate identities which are both relational and individualistic, their recovery and usage became a priority in social studies and language arts classrooms? In what ways would our curriculums change if we drew from Sedgwick’s—as well as other nineteenth-century women’s—experiences? What would a curriculum look like that recognized the importance of love and the imagination, or what might occur if within our classrooms we used literature and history to grapple with open-ended life processes and apparent contradictions? Perhaps most

importantly, how will my own life and the lives of my students be different, if I learn to reverence their educations as journeys of the soul, rather than as products to be measured?

### End Notes

1. Separated from its literary history, “clue” now refers to “something that indicates a solution,” or “a key” (Carver, 1991. p. 113).

2.. In The Troubadour of Knowledge, Serres (1997) constructs spiritual imagery in order to both challenge educators’ illusions of control and to address the mystery involved in how students come to know. He notes that “the sowing of the spirit or the mind depends on the heat and the air, thus on the weather, which is rather aleatory, and not measured, regular time: it penetrates the world in whirlwinds. Nothing, everything, everything, nothing” (p. 51). Much like the wind, knowledge construction is often unpredictable, invisible, and difficult to measure. Most importantly, it is ultimately out of our control. An idea sown by one teacher may or may not lie dormant for years to come. Then, without warning a way of knowing or being emerges, or maybe it does not. In light of Serres’s imagery pervasive faith in our ability to predict “outcomes” and to set definite objectives is absurd. Sedgwick’s attention to spirituality carries with it similar implications.

3. In his Preface to The Troubadour of Knowledge, Serres (1997) describes the Harlequin’s coat as “zebrine, tigroid, iridescent, shimmering, embroidered, distressed, lashed, lacunar, spotted like an ocelot, colorfully patterned, torn up, knotted together; with overlapping threads, worn fringe, everywhere unexpected, miserable, glorious, so magnificent it takes your breath away and sets your heart to pounding” (xiv). It is “a map of the Harlequin’s travels,” and reflects the notion that the comedians sense of self emerges from the pieces and layers of his myriad of experiences (Serres, 1987, xiv). It is a coat that is always changing.

4. Sedgwick’s life journey also points to another obstacle typically assigned to women, that of receiving limited access to and support for a thorough education. In her historical study of the educational disadvantaging of women, Gerda Lerner (1993) argues that there are two generalizations we can make about women’s educations in Europe and the United States: “women are almost universally educationally disadvantaged in comparison with their brothers, and education is, for those few women able to attain it, distinctly a class privilege” (p. 22). Indeed, it was Sedgwick’s social standing that paved the way for her education. In spite of the fact that she attended some of the most “select” schools for young ladies, Sedgwick noted in her diary that “our minds were not weakened by too much study” (Kelley, 1987, xvi). Thus, even

Sedgwick's privileged rank could not afford her the full benefits of a rigorous formal education.

5. Borrowing from the work of Nancy Chodorow, Gilligan explains that in identifying themselves as female, girls "experience themselves as like their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation" (p. 8). While Chodorow's theoretical work is valuable, my particular interests are not aligned with possible theories of early childhood development. Instead, my focus is on the ways in which adolescents and women perceive their lives within the current moment, and how they might choose to reshape or re-interpret their past and present self-perceptions in order to inform the future in a positive manner.

6. In her work with testimonial literature Eppert (2000) cites "love" and "talk" as two conditions that are necessary for students to discuss their discomfort with the ambiguity that arises from their experiences with Holocaust testimony (p. 18). Both are conditions of democracy (when it does not overemphasize the individual) as well; therefore, it seems significant that an active type of love is necessary for ideological change both in democratic communities and when students engage literature that possesses new or "other" ideas.

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## **VITA**

Sally McMillan Tyler graduated with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University in May 2001. Prior to earning this degree, she was awarded a master of arts degree in 1997 from the same institution. In addition to nineteenth-century women's literature and curriculum theory, she specialized in feminist theory, multicultural children's literature, qualitative research methods, and folklore.

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**Title of Dissertation:** Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie:  
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**Approved:**

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